



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, April 29, 2014**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 29, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)  
[English]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights entitled “Statutory Review of Part XVII of the Criminal Code”. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table its comprehensive response to this report.

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### PETITIONS

#### CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions. The first petition asks that the Criminal Code of Canada include a specific criminal offence for torture committed by non-state actors, private individuals, and organizations.

#### MINING INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls for the creation of an ombudsman for the mining industry in Canada.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition calls on the government to do what it can to review what is happening with the Venezuelan government and human rights activities in Venezuela.

#### BLOOD AND ORGAN DONATION

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and present two petitions. The petitioners are asking that the sexual preferences of people not be an instant refusal of their right to donate blood and blood products. They are asking the government to return the right of any healthy Canadian to give the gift of blood, bone marrow, and

organs to those in need. They point out that no matter their race, religion, or sexual preference, the right to give blood or donate organs is universal to any healthy man or woman.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present this petition drawing the attention of the House of Commons of Parliament to the following: that Canada and the international communities' actions are not attending the level of severity, cruelty, and impunity of the human rights crimes perpetrated by the President of Venezuela, President Maduro, nor the ongoing massive protests in Venezuela.

They are requesting an emergency debate at the Organization of American States to discuss the Venezuelan crisis and the activation of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, among a number of other requests.

#### BLOOD AND ORGAN DONATION

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honour of the Rocky Campana and iCANdonate campaign to present a petition. The petition requests that organ donations not be discriminatory and that they be based upon science. Petitioners call on the government to review this policy so that individuals who wish to donate organs will not suffer discrimination based on their sexual preferences. Science is the basic reason deciding organ donation, not prejudice.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I too rise today on behalf of Canadians who are calling on the government to thoroughly review and change its policy on blood and organ donation in Canada. They are asking that sexual preferences of people not be an instant refusal to the right to donate and point out that discrimination against people in same-sex relationships is unconstitutional and goes against Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The issue is promiscuity, not the choice of partner.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions from Canadians asking the Government of Canada to return the rights of any healthy Canadian to give the gift of blood, bone marrow, and organs to those in need. No matter their race, religion, or sexual preference, the right of people to give blood or donate organs is universal.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two similar petitions from a group of Canadians. They request that sexual preferences of people not be an instant refusal to the right to donate and they request that the Government of Canada return the right of any healthy Canadian to give the gift of blood, bone marrow, and organs to those in need. No matter the race, religion, or sexual preference of a person, the right to give blood or donate organs is universal to any healthy man or woman.

**Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions relating to the issue that has already been raised, which is the automatic refusal to accept blood, bone marrow, and organs as a consequence merely of sexual preference. The unconstitutional nature of this practice has been pointed out by others, and it is time to end it.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition this morning calling for the elimination of discrimination regarding blood and organ donation. The discrimination has to do with people's sexual preference, which is a personal choice. We should be relying on scientific data regarding blood and organ donation.

[English]

## LYME DISEASE

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

The first is relevant to business that we will take up later this afternoon in private members' business. My bill, Bill C-442, calling for a national Lyme disease strategy, is up for the second hour of its second reading. Citizens from Etobicoke, St. Marys, and other locations in Ontario have petitioned this House to support the bill. I hope that will be the case.

● (1010)

## BLOOD AND ORGAN DONATION

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Victoria and southern Vancouver Island. It calls upon the government to review and reaffirm the rights of any healthy Canadian to make donations of blood, bone marrow, and organs. Canada ranks well behind other industrialized countries in our rates of organ donation. We should not be refusing organs that have been pretested and proven to be safe because of prejudice toward the sexual preference of the donor.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from thousands of Canadians who call upon the Government of Canada to return the rights of any healthy Canadian to give blood, bone marrow, or organs to those in need, no matter the race, religion, or sexual preference of a person. The right to give blood or donate organs is universal to any healthy man or woman. The sexual preferences of people should not be an instant refusal of the right to donate.

## THE SENATE

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I table a petition that I believe is quite timely. It is signed by residents of Winnipeg North. It is dealing with the issue of our Senate. The petitioners are asking for the Prime Minister and the

government to look at ways to reform the Senate that would not require constitutional amendments. I believe it is a timely petition, given the Supreme Court ruling.

## BLOOD AND ORGAN DONATION

**Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am joining the chorus of members today who are putting forward petitions by residents of Canada who are calling upon the government to thoroughly review and change the policy on blood and organ donation, specifically that the sexual preference of people not be an instant refusal of the right to donate.

[Translation]

That constitutes discrimination against people in same-sex relationships. This is unconstitutional and goes against the rights of all Canadians. Clearly this needs to be changed.

[English]

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I too rise to present a petition calling upon the Government of Canada to revise the blood and organ donation policy in this country. It is currently discriminatory against people who are in same-sex relationships and it discriminates in particular against gay men.

I would like to salute the efforts of Nancy and Rob Campana on behalf of their son Rocky. They discovered after his death that his organs could not be donated. It has been their push, along with that from my colleague from Windsor, Brian Masse, that has called all of us together in the House today on this issue.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I remind members not to use the personal names of members.

Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I have hundreds of petitions from Canadians urging that despite sexual orientation, people be allowed to give the gift of life to those who need organ transplants or blood transfusions. The petitioners remind us that to refuse people the right to donate on the basis of sexual preference is unconstitutional.

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I also wish to present two petitions, joining the other members who have risen today on this issue. The petitioners are demanding that gays be given the right to donate organs. These people currently face systemic discrimination regarding that right. There is no discrimination regarding other factors, such as race and religion. The petitioners and donors, who realize that all donors must be pretested, want this automatic ban to be lifted, giving everyone the same rights as every other donor.

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I join a multitude of my colleagues in presenting a petition this morning on behalf of the iCANdonate campaign. These residents of Canada are calling upon the Government of Canada to review thoroughly and change the policy on blood and organ donation in Canada.

The petitioners are asking that the sexual orientation of people not be an instant refusal of the right to donate. We know that organ, blood, and blood product donations are vitally needed across this country, and every Canadian who wishes to donate should be able to do so. Discrimination against people in same-sex relationships is unconstitutional and goes against Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Petitioners are requesting the Government of Canada to return the rights of any healthy Canadian to give the gift of blood, bone marrow, and organs to those in need. No matter the race, religion, or sexual orientation of a person, the right of any healthy woman or man to give blood or donate organs is universal.

• (1015)

[Translation]

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I too wish to present some petitions on organ, bone marrow and blood donation. The petitioners want this to be a fundamental right for all Canadians, regardless of the donor's sexual orientation.

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues in the House of Commons, I also wish to present a petition from the iCANdonate campaign. Canadians are calling on the government to change the legislation and allow homosexual men to donate blood and organs. These archaic regulations date back to the 1980s, and scientific evidence has shown that these kinds of regulations are no longer needed.

Along with the people of Canada, I am calling on the government and Health Canada to review these regulations.

**Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is difficult to stay on top of legislation because there is so much of it, and I was astounded to learn that this matter had not been settled yet. It is completely backwards to think that organs donated by a homosexual individual are unacceptable. It is absolutely backwards.

I have the honour to present this petition to the House. It comes from Canadians across the country. They are pointing out that this is simply unconstitutional and that it goes against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I hope that this will soon change.

[English]

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition signed by thousands of Canadians who took part in the iCANdonate campaign.

The petitioners are calling for an end to discrimination that donors face, particularly gay men and members of the LGBT community. Everyone should have the right to donate, and we do this in memory of a man who was prevented from doing so because of his sexual orientation.

Canadians are saying that we must put an end to this and we must move forward.

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present three petitions in support of the iCANdonate campaign.

It is particularly fortuitous that these petitions are being presented this week, during national organ donor week. When Canadians are looking for ways to find more people to donate organs, it behooves us to make sure we eliminate the discrimination against gay men that prevents them from donating organs and to base our decisions on donations of blood and organs on science and not prejudice.

## GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first petition calls upon Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa in order to allow proper review of the impact on farmers in Canada.

## INCOME TAX DEDUCTIONS FOR TRADESPEOPLE

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with regard to allowing tradespersons and indentured apprentices to deduct travel and accommodation expenses from their taxable income so they can procure and maintain employment.

## FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition calls upon the House of Commons to amend the Food and Drugs Act with regard to mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods.

## BLOOD AND ORGAN DONATION

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to add the dozens of names contained in my two petitions to the thousands of Canadians who have participated in the iCANdonate campaign and join the voices in the chorus of all the colleagues here who have presented this petition today.

It is 2014. It is time that we end the prejudice in organ, blood, and marrow transplants.

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## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1020)

*[English]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP)**  
moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program has been open to abuse resulting in the firing of qualified Canadian workers, lower wages and the exploitation of temporary foreign workers, and therefore the government should: (a) impose an immediate moratorium on the Stream for Lower-skilled Occupations, which includes fast-food, service and restaurant jobs; and (b) request an urgent audit of the whole program by the Auditor General.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Saint-Lambert.

I am pleased to stand this morning to introduce our opposition day motion, one I hope all members of this House will join me in supporting.

I want to start by reminding my Conservative and Liberal colleagues of the purpose of the temporary foreign worker program, which is to enable employers to hire a worker on a temporary basis to fill immediate skills and labour shortages when Canadian citizens and permanent residents are not available to do the job.

It might seem curious that I choose to highlight the purpose of the program to both the Liberal and Conservative members of this House. However, the original version of the program was created under the Liberals in 1973 by Pierre Trudeau. In 2002, again under the Liberals, Jean Chrétien grew the program to include a category for low-skilled occupations. The current Conservative government then expanded the low-skilled occupations category in 2006. In 2012, the Conservatives made it even more enticing for employers to overlook qualified Canadian workers by sanctioning lower pay for temporary foreign workers and introduced an expedited LMO approval process, which was no process.

The fact is that the Liberals created this program wrought with loopholes and then made unwise changes that resulted in bigger holes. The Conservative government has continued that trend, so badly managing it that now not only are Canadians being overlooked for jobs in favour of cheaper labour via this program, but they are being fired from jobs they have held for years.

Recently the media has been awash with stories, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. The Alberta Federation of Labour has identified over 200 cases in which employers broke the rules of this program last year alone.

I was opposite the Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism when he was responsible for immigration. It was in that capacity that I first began to ask him about his plans to fix this program. We talked about it in November 2012 when it was discovered that HD Mining had hired 201 temporary foreign workers through this program when there was no shortage of capable Canadian miners who could have filled those positions. At that time, the minister assured me that he was

reviewing the program. I find myself wondering what that review looks like these days.

A year ago, 45 RBC employees in Toronto were set to lose their jobs after the bank brought in temporary foreign workers to replace them. At that time, I and my NDP colleagues appealed to the minister and he made some token changes to the program in response. Still, there was no comprehensive review of the whole program.

Earlier this year, 65 ironworkers at an oil sands project near Fort McMurray were fired in favour of temporary foreign workers. In Victoria, three McDonald's restaurants, all operating under the same owner, are accused of overlooking Canadian applicants in favour of temporary foreign workers. In Kelowna, Dairy Queen is accused of taking hours from Canadian employees and delegating them instead to temporary foreign workers. In Weyburn, Saskatchewan, after 28 years at Brothers Classic Grill and Pizza, Sandy Nelson was suddenly fired in favour of temporary foreign workers. In B.C. and Alberta, temporary foreign workers were brought in to work at Tim Hortons and they were made to reimburse their employer in cash for their overtime pay. In Labrador, two dozen temporary foreign workers were housed in a single apartment complex, and in Nova Scotia, a business owner was charged with 56 counts of fraud last year for paying temporary foreign workers as little as \$3.00 an hour.

● (1025)

These are but a few of the many hundreds of examples of the Conservative government's complete mismanagement of the temporary foreign worker program. When challenged time and time again, the Conservatives feign outrage and surprise as though it is somehow not the program they are supposed to be running that is allowing for these egregious abuses.

In 2009 the Auditor General told the government that its process for issuing LMOs does not ensure quality and consistency of decisions. There is no follow-up to verify that employers are complying with the terms and conditions agreed to when they were issued the labour market opinion, such as wages and working conditions. The LMO component of this program is deeply flawed. After two years sitting across from the minister, I have had more opportunities than I can count to observe the unbelievable erroneous distribution of labour market opinions by the government. The mess of the LMO granting process alone warrants an audit. When I was first handed the immigration portfolio, I assumed the LMO process was thorough and accurate. It certainly seemed that way at face value. It did not take long before I realized that something was drastically wrong.

*Business of Supply*

Something is wrong. The LMO granting process is in dire need of an overhaul. How else are fast-food restaurants in urban cities where youth unemployment is sky-high getting LMOs to bring in temporary foreign workers? There is no oversight. How can employers state on their applications they will pay  $x$  number of dollars per hour and in actuality pay several dollars less? There is no accountability. This is driving wages down in Canada. This is displacing Canadian workers. This is preventing Canadian workers from being considered for entry-level jobs. This is exploiting temporary foreign workers. This is not okay.

In 2011 the Conservatives pretended to fix the program by creating a blacklist of employers who abuse the program. It was all for show. That list was blank until this month when, to save face, the government scurried to add the names of three employers on a Sunday afternoon.

The Conservatives talk a good game. They keep promising to get tough on employers who abuse the program and yet the program keeps going and they keep issuing LMOs and reports of abuse keep pouring in.

The fact is the Conservative government has grown the temporary foreign worker program to outrageous proportions. In the lowest skilled category alone the number of temporary foreign workers in Canada has increased by 698% since the Conservatives came into power. To date, the government has refused to do anything to fix this program in a substantive way. Why should Canadians believe them now?

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has said there is very little evidence of a skills shortage in Canada and yet the minister goes on and on about a skills mismatch in this country. This is his way of justifying the expansion of this program and ignoring experts who know more in this field.

Between 2007 and 2010 Dominique M. Gross of Simon Fraser University in my beautiful province of B.C., studied the process of hiring temporary foreign workers in B.C. and Alberta. She found that there was very little real evidence of shortage in many of the low-skill occupations, but they were being fast-tracked nonetheless. Her study concluded that the flood of temporary foreign workers in the country added a cumulative 3.9 percentage points to the unemployment rate in western Canada.

Economist Arthur Sweetman agrees with her conclusion. He said that the Canadian unemployment rate would probably be going down a little faster if the temporary foreign worker program wasn't quite so robust.

Christopher Worswick, an economist at Carleton University, feels especially bad for young people in all of this:

The kinds of jobs that are more and more likely to be filled by TFWs...were traditionally first jobs for many young Canadians and/or supported them while they pursued post-secondary education. If employers are able to bring in TFWs rather than raising wages to induce young Canadians to take these jobs or perhaps move to regions where such jobs exist, this could mean that young Canadians may face even greater difficulties in becoming established in the labour market and accumulating the skills they need to move into higher-skilled occupations.

The real reason we are here today is to protect jobs not only for my teenage grandchildren but for everybody's grandchildren, children, nephews, and nieces.

• (1030)

Therefore, I am calling on the government, and I am reminding my hon. colleagues, to do the right thing. The unemployment rates among young people have risen. For those with a high school education, it is at 15.5% in my home province of B.C. This program, as it is being managed, is not going to bring that number down.

We are asking for an immediate moratorium on the stream for low-skilled occupations, no new applications for fast food or hospitality, cleaning services, food processing, general labourers, or working a cash register. We want this program fixed first, actually fixed.

We are also asking for an urgent audit of this program by the Auditor General. The Liberals and Conservatives have been in charge of this program since its inception, and it is a mess. We must clean it up. We must go forward and use this program as it was intended, for temporary labour shortages.

I look forward to standing with my colleagues from all parties in this House in unanimous support of this motion. The evidence is clear. This cannot continue.

**Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there were a large number of inaccuracies in that speech. I would just like to ask the member about the two most serious of them.

First, in the case of the company she cited but did not name, where \$3 per hour has been paid to a temporary foreign worker, has the member or her office brought this to the attention of the hotline, the CBSA, or law enforcement so that these illegal activities can be stopped? We have a responsibility in cases such as this not just to talk about them anonymously in this House but to take action to ensure the law is enforced.

Second, there has been a flood of a different kind in recent months, as my colleague the Minister of Employment and Social Development mentioned in this House yesterday, and that is of continuing requests from NDP members for LMOs for low-skilled workers to come and serve companies in their ridings.

*Business of Supply*

Before asking for an even broader moratorium than the one we brought in, will the member in question start with a moratorium on those requests from her caucus to my colleague the Minister of Employment and Social Development and to me for LMOs for low-skilled temporary foreign workers to come to their ridings?

There is a double standard here, and we need to clean that up first.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, let me remind my hon. colleague across the way that the story I cited about somebody who was being paid \$3 an hour was investigated. It was all over the media. It is not a secret to anyone else, but apparently it may be to the minister.

Second, let me also reassure my colleague across the way that absolutely no member of the NDP has ever asked for a Canadian worker to be fired or not to be hired.

Let me also remind my colleague across the way that it is his government that gives LMOs, and that once it grants the LMOs, if our MPs help with the process of the guidance of that through the system that exists, that is different.

I want to make it very clear that this party, this caucus, is not opposed to a temporary foreign worker program that is robust, highly regulated, enforced, and has very clear consequences. The minister seems to think that, just because advocacy occurs at some time, we are opposed to the whole program. We are opposed to the government's granting of LMOs, which only it can grant, willy-nilly and without any oversight.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in good part, I agree with some of the comments made by the New Democratic Party member.

Where I disagree is with how she tries to pass blame as if there is some fault here within the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party called for Canada's Auditor General to investigate. The program is broken. It does need to be fixed. This is something we have been advocating for.

The member accurately points out that it was Pierre Trudeau who established a foreign worker program, and at the time the New Democrats actually supported that particular program. In her last answer, the member said she wants to see a robust temporary foreign worker program. That is exactly what it was under Liberal administrations. It is only in the last four or five years that we have seen massive abuse of the program.

My question to the member is this. Does she not recognize that in representing her caucus she needs to be a little more focused and needs to make sure her comments are somewhat accurate, in the sense that the problem we have today is because of the last number of years? If the government does not get it rectified, thousands of Canadians will in fact be deprived of opportunities for employment.

• (1035)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my colleague that he does not have to worry about my focus. My focus is very clear.

The Liberals introduced a program with very tight guidelines at the beginning, and New Democrats absolutely supported it. We would support a program that is highly regulated and enforceable

today for the skills shortage and legitimate needs. However, it was the Liberals who opened the door, and it is the Conservatives who have now opened the floodgates to allow for the abuses that are taking place today, which are denying Canadians jobs, losing Canadian jobs, and keeping our young people out of the job market, where they could get the kind of training they need to up their skills.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on April 14, CBC reported that three McDonald's franchises in Victoria were cutting jobs and the hours of their Canadian employees and replacing them with temporary foreign workers. Since that news report, other reports about the abuse of the temporary foreign worker program have come flooding in.

Bowing to pressure, the Minister of Employment and Social Development finally announced a moratorium on hiring low-skilled temporary foreign workers for the food services sector.

At that time, the minister reiterated that he had warned the businesses numerous times: the temporary foreign worker program should be used only as a last resort. Businesses must be able to prove that they first offered available jobs to Canadian workers, without success.

It is important to remind them about the rules, but it is not that useful if it falls on deaf ears. Scandals related to the temporary foreign worker program have been building up since 2012. It took the minister two years to do something more than just remind them of the rules. How is that for efficiency and diligence?

For two years, the Conservative government ignored the evidence. It spared the businesses that are scamming the system. It turned a deaf ear to the NDP's concerns and our request for an emergency debate on April 8.

Canadians across the country are becoming increasingly concerned about the job situation. Three hundred thousand people have not been able to find work since the 2008 recession. True to form, the Conservatives do a lot of talking, but they take too little action, too late.

This series of scandals that has just come to light with regard to the temporary foreign worker program is proof of much more than the Conservatives' incompetence, a fact that is known and recognized. It proves that the Conservatives' real objective is to reduce workers' wages and benefits, which is disgraceful.

This ideology is at the heart of the Conservatives' employment policy. It explains why they see labour shortages where there is unemployment. It explains the current irregularities in the temporary foreign worker program.

This program was originally created to fill occasional labour shortages when employers were unable to find Canadian workers or permanent residents to fill those positions.



*Business of Supply*

The number of eligible sectors was quite limited, and the process was very controlled. Companies had to show that they had made an honest attempt to hire local workers. Then, they would be allowed to hire foreign workers on a temporary basis only to fill an occasional need, thereby preventing the lack of workers from hindering their development and depriving them of business opportunities.

However, since the Conservatives took office, things have gone from bad to worse in this regard, and Canadians are paying the price. The Conservatives began by expanding the list of jobs that are eligible for the program. They expanded it to lower-skilled jobs. Then, they made the rules of the program more flexible and reduced oversight. Even though there was a recession, they did not tighten the rules for recruiting foreign workers.

Each time, the Conservatives justify their lax management of this program by saying that there is a labour shortage.

The Conservatives do not listen when the NDP shows that there is no labour shortage and that 300,000 Canadians have not been able to find work since the recession.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has produced a report indicating that the Conservatives' labour shortage claims are based on false data, but the minister continues to insist that there is a labour shortage. It is no use. The Conservatives continue to insist that the temporary foreign worker program needs to be even more flexible.

The government has pushed this logic to the point of allowing companies to pay temporary foreign workers 15% less than Canadian workers. It is therefore not surprising that the number of temporary foreign workers in Canada skyrocketed from 100,000 in 2002 to 340,000 in 2012.

The number of temporary workers has ballooned since the Conservatives came to power. There are now 60,000 more temporary workers than permanent residents. Low-skilled occupations account for the most significant increases. Since 2006, the number of low-skilled temporary foreign workers has exploded by more than 700%.

Food services are the second most common occupation for temporary foreign workers. In 2012, the restaurant industry received 44,000 positive LMOs, 900% more than in 2006.

We are talking about cashiers at Tim Hortons and employees at McDonald's, not highly specialized jobs requiring skills that are in short supply.

We also have to take into account the experiences of these foreign workers to understand the problems with this program.

●(1040)

They come here hoping to create better lives for themselves and their families—a laudable goal. Many of them come to Canada not knowing how to speak English or French. They know nothing about normal working conditions here. They know nothing about their rights, their employer's obligations toward them, or their options for recourse against their employer.

There have certainly been scandalous and shocking revelations lately, but let us also bear in mind that the Conservatives' lack of concern about the temporary foreign worker program is having significant repercussions on the labour market. These repercussions

are described in a C.D. Howe Institute report released last week. The report shows that the use of temporary workers has resulted in a 4% increase in the unemployment rate in Alberta and British Columbia. The unemployment rate for low-skilled workers is 13.4% in Alberta and 15.5% in B.C., which is twice the average.

In Canada, there are six workers for every available job, so how can there be a general labour shortage? Why is there any need to resort to temporary workers to work in restaurants when the unemployment rate in that field is twice the national average?

Instead, the Conservative government is encouraging temporary foreign workers to come because they are easier to manipulate than Canadian workers. If they ask for anything, starting with a wage increase, the employer can easily get rid of them. The Conservative government's sloppy management of the temporary foreign worker program and its determination to see a labour shortage where there clearly is none say a lot about its ideological motives.

The Conservatives want a society in which corporations can freely exploit workers, where wage increases slow down, businesses pay lower taxes and people receive fewer services. The Conservatives' plan for Canada is a society of injustice and inequality. We want the results of this investigation to be released as soon as possible.

Unlike this government, we want to build an inclusive society where everyone can find their place. To do that, we must make every effort to stimulate the job market and integrate the immigrants we need for the long term. This means that the temporary foreign worker program must be changed in order to restore it to its original purpose.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again I would like to just reinforce that the program in itself has historically played a fairly significant role in our development as a country. Having said that, there is no doubt that there has been massive abuse of the program over the last number of years, at a significant cost. Among other ramifications, literally tens of thousands, if not even getting into the hundreds of thousands, of Canadians have been displaced or have not been able to get the type of employment opportunities they should have been able to get.

The question I have for the member is this. Would she not agree with what the deputy leader of the Liberal Party specifically advocated—and it is a part of the motion—that to re-establish confidence in the program, we need to have Canada's Auditor General investigate and report back on the program itself? Something has gone wrong. The best person or office to look into this is the Auditor General of Canada. In order to restore confidence, would the member not agree that it is necessary and should be done immediately?

●(1045)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé:** Mr. Speaker, obviously, the abuses of this program have doubled and even tripled. That is unacceptable. It is clear that this government has been lax about auditing this program and conducting investigations that might put an end to the abuses.

*Business of Supply*

As far as today's motion is concerned, I want to reiterate that what we are asking for is perfectly clear. First, we want the government to impose an immediate moratorium on the stream for lower-skilled occupations, which includes fast-food, service and restaurant jobs. Second, we want the government to request an urgent audit of the whole program by the Auditor General.

I urge all my colleagues to support this motion.

[*English*]

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have one question for the New Democrats and they have not answered it. There is a calling for a moratorium, which the minister has already undertaken. My question for the New Democrats is this. How long do they want the moratorium to be in place?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé:** Mr. Speaker, the minister took action only because the temporary foreign worker program was making headlines and still is. That is when the minister saw fit to respond, and quite substantially at that. It is clear to us, when we see the abuses of this program and the significant consequences they have for Canadians, that it is necessary to support this motion. That is what I am asking my colleague to do.

**Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the last question from our Conservative friends. It is up to them to determine how long the moratorium will last. If the program works well, as it should, the moratorium will not last very long.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this aspect of the problem, which is the government's and not the official opposition's responsibility. Unfortunately, the Conservatives are in charge for a few more months; they run the country.

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the question.

Ever since this program was established—and constantly since 2012—we have pointed out the abuses. We have called on this government to take responsibility and appropriate action, which it has not done.

Today, as my colleague mentioned earlier, there is no doubt that we are committed to this program. We hope that the businesses that really need it and are acting in good faith can hire temporary foreign workers. Quite simply, as called for in the motion, a moratorium is needed. The length of this moratorium will be decided once it is in place. Obviously, the sooner this decision is made, the sooner the government supports this motion, the sooner we can fix the problems associated with this program.

[*English*]

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this motion. The motion has been brought forward by the member for Newton—North Delta. It is passing strange, of course, that the motion calls for doing things that are very similar to what the minister has already done. Again, it is the NDP late to the party and late to getting things done.

However, what is concerning to many of us is that the NDP actually maybe wants something different from what it is calling for today, and it is those things I will discuss today.

I should indicate, Mr. Speaker, that I will be splitting my time with the Minister of State (Social Development).

The reason the minister brought forward the moratorium in existence today is to provide assurance to Canadians that everything is being done to ensure that there is integrity within the temporary foreign worker system and within the program itself.

It is my belief, and it is the belief of our government, that there should be zero tolerance for any employer who creates a situation by which Canadians are being displaced from work opportunities by temporary foreign workers. We have always stated, and the rules require, the law requires, that Canadians get a crack at every single job before any temporary foreign workers are able to take those positions.

We believe that the program needs to be in place for those employers who actually need it, but it is important that we undertake a system that is rigorous to ensure that temporary foreign workers are not displacing Canadians, that temporary foreign workers are not being abused, and that temporary foreign workers are being paid the prevailing wage rate for that industry in the particular region to which they are going.

The Minister of Employment and Social Development has said repeatedly, and continues to say, that we have a mismatch between skills and the available jobs in this country. That is in fact the truth in my riding of Peace River. Throughout the country, there are places like the Peace Country where it is difficult to find people to fill the jobs that are available.

Over the last number of years, the city of Grande Prairie and the region I represent have seen a massive influx of people coming from across this country to find opportunity, prosperity, and hope for their families as a result of the great opportunities that have been developing in the Peace Country. These opportunities are, of course, in the oil and gas sector, the agricultural sector, the forestry sector, the hospitality sector, and all the other sectors in between.

Employers' number one concern, number one issue, over the last number of years, or really the last decade, has been trying to find the right people for the jobs to fill the vacancies that exist today.

I will tell members just how acute the labour challenges are in the riding I represent. Currently, Statistics Canada reports that the unemployment rate in the region I represent is under 3%. It is, I believe, 2.8% right now. What we know is that this means that there are major challenges for employers to fill the job vacancies that exist today.

*Business of Supply*

I was talking to one employer yesterday. It is an employer who owns four restaurants in the city of Grande Prairie. They have a hiring policy whereby they will hire anyone who walks through the door. Currently they have four restaurants that are being served by 150 employees. It is a franchise operation. A similar operation in other parts of the country would have 150 employees per location. They have 150 employees for four locations. Right now there are over 300 job vacancies for that employer alone. Their policy is to hire anyone who applies for a job at their restaurants. For the last 13 years, this employer tells me, they have had an ongoing hiring process by which they will hire pretty much anyone who walks through the door. Right now the policy is that employees are told that no person who comes in and asks for a job application is allowed to leave the store without having an interview.

This is the type of environment we see in my riding. We see it in other places in this country. Obviously, the temporary foreign worker program has been essential for this particular industry in my riding, as it has been in other places, but even the temporary foreign workers who have come still have not filled all the jobs that are available. In fact, this is one employer who has 300 job vacancies. I can tell the House that it is the same circumstance for other employers throughout the city of Grande Prairie and throughout the Peace Country.

• (1050)

Just the other day, I was speaking to one of the other employers in my riding. He is the owner of two small restaurants. They are fast food operations. He told me that he has quite a diverse group of people in his employ at the two locations. As a matter of fact, he has two 12-year-olds on the payroll right now. With the exception of a few of the managers within his operations, almost the majority of the Canadians who work in his operations have either a physical or a mental disability. The employer has made every effort to ensure that people of all abilities are being hired at his operations to ensure that no Canadian is passed over when he is hiring folks and trying to fill the vacancies there today.

Regarding the program that exists, I am concerned about some of the comments by the Liberals and the NDP. My friend from Winnipeg North said that there is the possibility that hundreds of thousands of Canadians are being displaced by temporary foreign workers. The difficulty with the statement the member made is that there are approximately only 400,000 temporary foreign workers in Canada right now. That would mean that the vast majority of temporary foreign workers were displacing jobs that Canadians would otherwise have. That is not even plausible.

We know that in applying for temporary foreign workers for an LMO, a labour market opinion, employers have to prove that they have made every effort to hire Canadians first. They have to post national advertisements for the vacancies. They have to require that the advertising indicates not minimum wage but the prevailing wage rate in that industry that Canadians would be paid. That is before they can even apply to get a permit to bring in a temporary foreign worker. Then there is a whole other process to ensure that the person who is coming actually meets the criteria of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. There is quite a process.

We have had some high profile cases of abuse that have been in the media. There is no question. I find it horribly offensive and reprehensible that employers would be involved in these abuses. However, it is important that my colleagues on the opposition benches understand that legitimate employers find it even more offensive. They understand the importance of temporary foreign workers and the role they play.

The employers in my region and the vast majority of employers across the country who use the temporary foreign worker program make every effort to hire Canadians first, not just because it is the right thing to do but because it is oftentimes the easier thing to do. People who are trying to bring in temporary foreign workers have to go through a number of different processes to ensure that they are legitimate in bringing those temporary foreign workers to Canada. Especially in the low-skill labour market, they have to pay for the tickets for these folks to come. The employers are responsible for those costs. The employers have to provide housing. The employers have to pay for health insurance. The employers have to do a number of things they would not have to do if they hired Canadians. In the vast majority of cases, employers would absolutely hire every Canadian before bringing on a temporary foreign worker.

There are cases of abuse. The minister has indicated through the moratorium that he is going to review these cases of abuse. It is important that members of Parliament, if they are aware of any cases of abuse within their own constituency, make the hotline aware of them so that these cases can be investigated. It is not right for people to come to the House and allege that all kinds of abuse are happening without making the authorities aware of them.

• (1055)

I encourage members of Parliament, not only on behalf of the government, but on behalf of employers that use this program, to protect the program and its integrity. It is important for those people who know of or have heard of abuse to report it, and it will be investigated immediately.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a little correction for my colleague across the way. He said that the NDP was late to the game after the moratorium was called. Let me assure him that when some very brave Canadians broke the story on CBC about how they were having their hours and pay reduced or being fired, it was only then we became aware of how widespread this abuse was. We called for a moratorium on low-skilled workers before the minister actually declared one.

I keep hearing the fact that it is so difficult to get LMOs. Would my colleague like to explain to me how a McDonald's owner in Victoria, with very high youth unemployment rates, got LMOs when he reduced hours and fired a person? Why would anybody think that Victoria, one of the most beautiful cities to live in, would have had that kind of shortage? What kind of oversight is there to ensure LMOs are not given out willy-nilly?

• (1100)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what the minister has undertaken. He has undertaken a review of that case to ensure that if there was abuse, if the rules were not followed and if the law was broken, the people who undertook to break the law would be held accountable.

*Business of Supply*

When I said that the New Democrats were late in the game, it was that they would bring forward a motion to debate exactly what the minister had already announced, unless they are proposing something more than what minister has already announced.

The New Democrats are saying more and they are assuring me of that now, but they are not calling for anything more in the text of that motion, so I can only assume they want the program shut down.

I believe the program must be managed well. The minister has undertaken the responsible action of putting forward an investigation during the time of the moratorium, including cases that have been identified in the media. If the members in the NDP know of additional cases that should be reviewed, it is important they make those cases known to the minister or to the hotline to ensure those people breaking the law or rules are held accountable.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in listening to the response from the member, one is led to believe that the Conservatives are supportive of the motion before us today, but they have already taken the necessary action.

One of the actions within the motion is to recognize the importance of Canada's Auditor General. Yesterday the deputy leader of the Liberal Party stood in his place and asked the government to have the Auditor General of Canada engaged on this very important issue.

The bottom line is that we have excessive numbers of temporary foreign workers in Canada today, well over 300,000 I understand. That is a huge increase from what it was a decade ago.

Would the member reaffirm, as he started to do in his last answer, that he is comfortable with the motion, albeit somewhat late in terms of timeliness, and of getting the Auditor General of Canada engaged on the issue?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Speaker, as the minister has already indicated, the Auditor General is welcome to review the program, as the Auditor General is welcome to review any program.

I can assure the member opposite that the program is there, the rules are robust and that those people who are breaking the rules must be held accountable.

In cases of law-breaking, I am not sure the Auditor General is the right agency to hold them accountable. It is important that people from CBSA and, if it needs to be, the RCMP, are called in if people are involved in breaking the rules, in displacing Canadians or in human trafficking.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to talk to this motion, what the opposition has proposed and what we have already done as a government.

I very much appreciate the comments of my colleague from Peace River. The fact is the opposition is not only late to the game, but in some ways it is speaking out of both sides of its mouth on this issue. What we all recognize, and what the opposition clearly recognizes, is that there is some value in the temporary foreign worker program. If opposition members did not believe that, they would not have asked us many times over the last number of years for temporary foreign

workers to come to their ridings. Therefore, they recognize the value in it.

They obviously recognize that there are flaws that need to be fixed, but we do not have the support from those members to fix those flaws and make it a better system. Instead, they do things like they are doing today. They stand to present motions that are somewhat redundant and empty because they do not have a lot of actual action in them. Instead of supporting real reforms, real changes, they bring forward these kinds of motions.

I appreciate the fact that we can talk about it today, but I want to talk about what we have done, review what has gone on in the last few weeks and then talk about the changes we made this past summer. Just after I was sworn in to my current position, I worked with Minister Kenney, and we brought forward some changes to the temporary foreign worker program in July—

● (1105)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would remind the minister not to use names of members or ministers, but only refer to their ridings or titles.

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** I am sorry. Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to remind all of us of what has gone on over the last little while. In recent weeks we all became aware of abuses within this program and the Minister of Employment and Social Development acted immediately and directed officials to urgently look into these cases. Labour market opinions were suspended and companies were blacklisted. That is not just a small repercussion. In some cases, they can be blacklisted and banned for up to two years. When we talk about a moratorium, for these specific employers, it is a two-year moratorium.

However, more action was needed and that is why last Thursday, the Minister of Employment and Social Development announced an immediate moratorium on the food services sector's access to the program. That means until further notice new or pending applications for temporary foreign workers related to the food services sector will not be processed. That is very severe and very swift action.

In addition, previous approvals for any unfilled positions will be suspended. This moratorium will stay in effect until the ongoing review of the temporary foreign worker program is completed. Why are we doing this? It is simple. Swift, strong action was needed to send a message that abuse would not be tolerated.

Once again, we recognize, and I think the opposition also recognizes, that there is value in the temporary foreign worker program. In my riding there has been a really positive response to a seasonal worker program, for example, and there have not been abuses within that part of the program. However, when we see abuses, our government takes swift and decisive action.

*Business of Supply*

Despite the minister having repeatedly warned employers that the temporary foreign worker program could only be used as a last and limited resort when Canadians were not available, some employers were blatantly misusing the program. We must have a zero tolerance policy and Canadians must always be first in line for every available job. Employers must do more to fill jobs with Canadians.

If employers are found to have lied about their efforts to hire Canadians before asking to bring in a foreign worker, they will face criminal prosecution with sanctions that include fines and even jail time. Make no mistake, we are going to fix this program and our record shows how serious we take this.

This is where I want to talk a bit about what we have been doing, very concrete, common sense measures that also have a real ability to stop abusers. This is what we have done and unfortunately the opposition members have opposed all of these measures.

First is the authority to conduct on-site inspections to ensure that employers are meeting the conditions of the program. The opposition talks about the Auditor General, and certainly the Auditor General is welcome to come and look. He can do whatever he and his office choose to do. However, what I do not understand is that the members are calling for that when we are calling for inspectors to be on-site ensuring that the conditions are being met. Opposition members did not support that. In fact, they voted against that. When we are taking real action, and thank goodness we could pass that and it is in place, they opposed it. The next thing they could ask for is a royal commission or something like that.

We brought forward legislative authority to impose significant financial penalties for employers who broke the rules. Again, this is another a concrete measure. If an employer breaks the rules, it is going to cost that employer. One would think the opposition would support that. One would think members would say that this was a good idea, that it was something concrete, but they opposed it.

Another measure is the ability to ban non-compliant employers from the program for two years and immediately add their names to a public blacklist. The opposition members voted against that. There is no better way to stop abuse than to say to the abusers that they are blacklisted, that they will not be able to use this program for two years. Let us forget about politics. I understand opposition members have political points to try to score, but these are good, solid, common sense measures that actually have some teeth and ability to stop abuses. They did not support it.

Requiring employers who legitimately rely on temporary foreign workers to have a plan to transition to Canadian workforce over time is not penalizing abusers. This is working together with employers that are using the program legitimately. However, as the government, we are saying to those employers that we want them to transition into a Canadian workforce.

• (1110)

One would think the opposition members would say that is a good idea that makes sense. However, they did not support it. They voted against every positive idea we brought forward.

I remember this one in July very clearly. By removing the existing wage flexibility, we now require employers to pay temporary foreign workers at their prevailing wage. I remember the opposition

members talking about this. We went ahead, made the change, and agreed that it was a good policy initiative. We did it. They voted against it.

We added questions to employer LMO applications to ensure that the temporary foreign worker program is not used to facilitate the outsourcing of Canadian jobs. That was a loophole we needed to close. We did it. They voted against that.

We introduced fees for employers for LMO processing and increased the fees for work permits, so they are not being borne by the taxpayer. Again, I remember this clearly from July, when we brought this one forward. I remember some of my hon. colleagues across the way defending employers and saying they should not have to pay the fee, that the taxpayer should keep paying it, and asking why we were making employers pay the fee for LMOs. It is because employers should pay, at a minimum, the fee for LMOs.

They are looking puzzled across the way, but they voted against it. They did not support it. They spoke against our changes in the media. We did this nine months ago.

What they are talking about are changes we brought forward nine months ago, and instead of supporting them, they voted against them. Today, they are behind the eight ball. They are not up to date with what has been going on.

Another change we made was making English and French the only languages that could be used as job requirements when hiring through the temporary foreign worker process. We also suspended the accelerated labour market opinion process. These were changes that would help Canadians get jobs.

The other change we made that has been so important is ensuring employers advertise for longer periods of time and across the country. Certainly more reforms are needed, but our government does not want to throw the baby out with the bath water, and I do not think that is what the opposition would want either. We want to keep the program strong. We want it to be integral. We want it to work for employers that need it. However, we will not tolerate abuses.

That is the action we have taken. That has been our record. Canadians can count on us to continue to stand up for them, to make sure Canadians are always the first on the list and get first crack at every job available. We look forward to the opposition supporting other reforms as we deem them necessary.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to this. If we check the record, most likely any changes to the temporary foreign worker program were probably made in one of the multifarious omnibus budget bills. If the government would bring forward these kinds of amendments separately, we might give due consideration to them.

*Business of Supply*

In every occasion that has come to light—for example, serious problems in the restaurant sector—it has been revealed by the Alberta Federation of Labour, after access to information, that it found hundreds upon hundreds of violations by the applicants for LMOs, where they are paying below the wage offered in that sector. We have not seen any action by the government to start better scrutinizing of these LMOs that it is issuing illegally.

There is the issue of the oil sands workers. Iron workers—and I am hearing from other sectors it includes welders and boiler makers—are being replaced by temporary foreign workers. We have repeatedly, as much as a month ago, brought this to the attention of the government. My questions to the minister are these. What can we see in the way of increased surveillance and actual enforcement by the government? How many enforcers does it have available and deployed full time? Are any of those inspectors, or enforcers, deployed to the oil sands?

• (1115)

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** Mr. Speaker, I want to believe what my hon. colleague is saying, that the New Democrats would have supported these changes had they been stand-alone bills, except I vividly recall the NDP speaking out against our changes when we introduced a large number of them in July, including the fee changes and some of the other changes. The opposition members did speak against it, so it is a little rich for them to say that they would have supported it. The fact is that they did not. They did not support it in their voting record. They did not support it when they spoke publicly about the changes. They are coming to the table really late in terms of how we address these issues.

To address the member's question, this is exactly why we brought forward changes like being able to go in and inspect. Today the opposition members are again talking about the Auditor General coming in. We are talking about real inspectors going to the sites and ensuring compliance. We are including stiff penalties if employers are lying or not being honest on their LMOs, which include not only fines but jail terms, being blacklisted, and being banned from using the program for two years. These are real and substantial consequences.

We are looking at the program and will continue to make changes as needed, because at the end of the day we want Canadians to get first crack at every job that is available across the country. We want employers to know that, if it means they need to be paying Canadians more to get Canadians to come and work at that job, maybe that is what they need to do.

We want Canadians to get the jobs. At the same time, we do not want to throw out the whole program, for example, for agricultural seasonal workers.

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the temporary foreign worker program has tripled since the current government took over. Nothing much happened until it became visible. The first big incident that occurred was the story about RBC hiring many employees from India to help it with its accounting. The government said it would do something about it. It always likes to come out and say it will take swift and decisive action. My hon. colleague has used those words several times today to say the government would fix the problem.

The next incident that occurred was dealing with a coal mine in British Columbia. When it became apparent that temporary foreign workers were being used instead of Canadians in this coal mine in British Columbia, the government again said it would take swift and decisive action.

Then there was the incident that occurred with McDonald's recently. Again, we are hearing that the government will take swift and decisive action to fix the problem.

Apart from that, the Conservatives attack the opposition members for anything they have ever said before.

I ask my hon. colleague this. When is she going to come up with a plan so that we do not have to resort to swift and decisive action again and again in the future?

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we have done. I know the Liberals did absolutely nothing. When temporary foreign workers came to Canada under the Liberals, there were no programs in place to change those temporary foreign workers into permanent—

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Just attack us.

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** Then they had no ideas, Mr. Speaker. They did nothing to change the integrity of the program.

We have a moratorium on the program for restaurant workers. Ask the restaurant workers if that is not swift and decisive action. Maybe it is time the member got back into his riding and, instead of asking for more temporary foreign workers, talk to them and see what is happening in those restaurants.

• (1120)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely misinformed.

This is the problem with the government. It does not want to take responsibility. It is like a foreign word that originates in the Prime Minister's office. It does not like to take responsibility.

The member, as well as the previous member, talked about the Conservative government fixing the problem. Who does the member think created the problem? It was the Conservative government that created the problem.

The member for Portage—Lisgar asked what the Liberals did to cure the problem. When we were in government, there was no problem with the temporary foreign worker program. That is the issue.

If it does its job as government, and it puts the checks in place, it can prevent the type of things that have taken place since the government has been in office. There has been massive abuse of the temporary foreign worker program. The responsibility lies with the government. It has not done its job. It has dropped the ball. As a result, tens of thousands of Canadians are losing their jobs.

I should have said at the outset that I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Cape Breton—Canso.

*Business of Supply*

We need to recognize the reality of the program. It was brought back in the 1970s. Former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau recognized the need for it, in order to allow Canada's economy to continue to grow and develop, in certain industries where there was a need for a high level of expertise. It was felt that we could not meet those needs at the time. It was important to have a program that would allow us the opportunity to bring people in to further develop certain industries, on a temporary basis.

That was the intent of the program. Over the years, the program has provided literally hundreds of thousands of opportunities for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. It has added tremendous value to our economy.

Jean Chrétien made some positive changes to the program during the 1990s, which really empowered a great deal of growth, in particular out west, through some of the refinements to the program.

Let us be very clear. Even though we might find an isolated case, overall, during the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and all the way up to 2005-06, that program was a huge success. It added tremendous value to our economy.

Now we have a government that is using that program for other means, to accomplish things Canadians would not be very happy with. We are starting to see that more and more. In particular, we have Canadians who are losing opportunities. The government has failed to ensure that the process is in fact being properly adhered to.

What is the process? One member made reference to the LMOs. They are a critical element of the process. If employers want to be able to hire temporary foreign workers, they have to advertise and be able to demonstrate to the Government of Canada, through human resources, that they have gone out of their way to try to hire someone locally.

Then, when they are unable to hire someone locally, which the employers have to be able to prove and demonstrate very clearly, then human resources would give them an LMO. With that LMO, employers now have the authority to hire people outside of Canada.

During Liberal administrations, I do not think we ever exceeded 160,000. Now we are well over 300,000. It is because there is a different agenda.

● (1125)

Within the Conservative government, there is a hidden agenda to suppress levels of income and to prevent individuals within Canada from having some of those critically important jobs.

We have university, post-secondary, and high school students looking for jobs, and they are looking to industries such as our hospitality industries. One gets a sense of frustration when one's son or daughter comes home saying they cannot find a job, that there is nothing out there, and then watches the 10 o'clock news to find out that the Conservative government has allowed an excessive amount of abuse within the temporary foreign worker program which is thereby denying their son, daughter, and other Canadians employment opportunities.

Government members would say that they are acting tough on this issue. However, they have not been acting tough. They talk tough,

but they definitely do not take action unless they are forced to take action. That is what we have seen from the current Conservative government. It does not take action unless it is forced into it, and this is an excellent example of that.

This is not the first time that the issue has been raised inside the House of Commons. I, for one, and members of the Liberal Party, have raised this issue on many occasions. However, the former minister of immigration would say that, well, the member for Winnipeg North had a request for a temporary foreign worker.

In Winnipeg, we had a million-dollar factory that was being established and the capital equipment was coming from a foreign country. The company asked if I would be able to assist in getting two individuals who took apart the machine to come to Winnipeg to establish the machine and train some of the employees so that it would be operational. They wanted to come for a couple of months. This is what the program is for. By getting that machine operational, we created more wealth here in Canada. We are providing more jobs here in Canada. That is why the program is in existence, and that is why I wrote that letter. I thought of the value to my constituents, to Canada, by allowing that to take place. Of course, the minister responsible talks about it as some weird thing, as if we support abuse of the program. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We want accountability. We want the current government to be responsible, and we are concerned about the program. We recognize the importance of the program and we want it to survive. Unlike the New Democrats, we see the value of the program, which is why the deputy leader of the Liberal Party stood in his place yesterday and challenged the government to get the Auditor General's office involved in this.

There is a lack of confidence that Canadians have regarding the temporary foreign worker program, and it comes from the government's inability to administer what should be a good, solid program. Because of the government's inability to administer the program properly, we now have Canadians highly suspicious of it. They want action, and who can blame them? Day after day, the leader of the Liberal Party has been talking about the importance of the middle class, and many of these jobs are being taken away from the middle class.

We want action. We want to see this program reviewed thoroughly, and the best person to do that is the Auditor General of Canada. It is through the Auditor General of Canada that we believe we will ultimately re-establish confidence in the program. That is what we are fighting for. Yes, we know the Auditor General can take it upon himself to investigate the program. We trust and hope, and we have taken action to encourage that to take place.

● (1130)

However, it would go a long way toward taking responsibility if the Conservatives recognized that they have messed up, and they joined with us and all members of the House to say that they want the provincial auditor to get involved on this file because it is the integrity of the program that we should all be concerned with, because it is the prosperity of Canada that we are fighting for today.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, some of the things my colleague said are certainly accurate. The Conservatives did in fact completely lose control of the program a long time ago. In addition, there is no doubt that it is the minister's responsibility to provide real solutions to address the various breaches of the program. It is also important to remember that the minister did respond when the issue made the headlines in the media.

I have a very specific question for my colleague. The Liberal leader downplayed the magnitude of the flaws in the temporary foreign worker program. Does the Liberal member agree with his leader that the government has lost control only to a certain extent?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the member gets her information. The leader of the Liberal Party has never downplayed the importance of what is taking place and the impact that this is having here in Canada. Never has that taken place. The leader of the Liberal Party has been a very strong advocate for Canada's middle class, and this particular program is causing a great deal of concern and losing jobs for many members of Canada's middle class. I do not know where the member gets this whole idea that the leader of the Liberal Party seems to be offside.

At the end of the day, if I want to contrast representation from leaders' offices and in particular on the Prairie file, I will take my leader over the leader of the New Democratic Party who has talked about western Canada and the Prairies being a Dutch elm disease and targeted western Canada as not necessarily the best environment for economic growth and that he wants to see it shift into other regions or base things on division.

The Liberal leader has been consistent. No matter whether it is in Quebec, the Prairies, Ontario, the Atlantic, or the Pacific, we have consistently fought for the middle class and will continue to do so.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my Liberal colleague's speech and I agree with him on some points. The Conservative government never backs off, unless it is pressured to do so. I would like to remind my Liberal colleague that we were the first ones to denounce the problems with the program.

I would also like to remind the Liberal member, as my colleague mentioned, that their response was half-hearted at best.

The question I would like to ask my Liberal colleague is the following: why have the Liberals refused to say whether they are taking the side of the Canadians losing their jobs or of the employers misusing the programs?

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting, as viewers will no doubt be watching, that the New Democrats seem to be focused strictly on the fact that they want to be perceived as the first party to deal with this issue. The record will demonstrate that the member is wrong. If the New Democrats want to assert proper credit to where credit is due, I would suggest that all they need to do is go over the years of *Hansard* discussions and they will find that theirs is

not the party that not only first talked about the issue but whose members have consistently talked about it through the years.

It is important that we recognize that in the last five or six years we have seen excessive abuse of the program and that is the reason the Liberal Party has specifically requested that we have the Auditor General engaged on the issue. On that particular point, I do believe our party might have actually been the first. However, again, it does not really matter. We are just glad to be able to bring this issue in this fashion to the House and continue to lobby for the government members to recognize that if they really want to establish or reinforce the importance of the program and get to the bottom of it, that we do need to get Canada's Auditor General engaged on it, thereby, hopefully, saving the program and providing and ensuring that Canadians are not losing jobs.

• (1135)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his well thought out and impassioned speech. He brought a lot to the debate today and hopefully I will be able to contribute a bit more myself.

I was able to dust off notes from the debate we entered into a year and two weeks ago when I presented a motion in the House calling for the government to embark on a full review of the temporary foreign worker program. Since that time we have seen another glaring example of the current government's ineptitude. We have seen the government's ineptitude time and time again, whether it is with respect to the fair elections act or something else. Any legislation that has gone well for the Conservatives would be on an incredibly short list.

The approach that the Conservatives have taken toward developing legislation is often in error, seldom in doubt. They are adverse to seeking the opinion of the people who know the issues. They are reluctant to study specific issues, or take any kind of recommendations or amendments from the opposition parties because they know it all. That attitude has placed the Conservative Party in trouble many times. Canadians are catching on. Canadians understand that full well, and nowhere is it more obvious than on this particular issue of temporary foreign workers.

One of my colleagues mentioned the letter we sent to the Auditor General. The Auditor General was aware of this issue back in 2009. It was the Auditor General who triggered great concern about the explosion in the number of temporary foreign workers in this country. As my colleague from Winnipeg North identified, in 2006 the number of temporary foreign workers in this country was 160,000. That number is about 360,000 now.

Two and a half years ago the former Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development took the shackles off this program, let the program run wild thereby accelerating the LMO process for businesses that wanted to bring in temporary foreign workers, and provided employers with the opportunity to pay 15% below market rates for their temporary foreign workers. This program was identified at that time as a great concern because it would put downward pressure on wages and impact the unemployment rate. That is what we are seeing now. We knew that was going to happen.



The government has said that this is an isolated case and that the minister has taken action. Make no mistake, this is not an isolated case. We have seen it many times. We have seen it in the mining sector, the banking sector, the service sector, and now we are seeing it in the fast-food industry.

The temporary foreign worker program is an important program in this country. At one time Canadians had a great deal of confidence in it. Many parts of this country do not have an agricultural sector. Nova Scotia would not have an agricultural sector if it were not for this program. The temporary foreign workers who work in these industries provide support to Canadians. They provide an opportunity for Canadians to maintain their jobs and continue to raise their families.

The government's mismanagement of the program has brought it into disrepute. Canadians think the program is like the Senate: we should just get rid of it. That does a great disservice to the program because it deserves to be saved.

• (1140)

I presented a motion this morning. The opposition parties, certainly the Liberal Party, with regard to this program, want to mend it, not end it, but that cannot be done in isolation. We have seen the government make one-off changes to this program, and every time it made a change, it created an unintended consequence and an even greater degree of mess.

Just to pick up on a comment from my colleague from Winnipeg North, whenever there is a question asked, the minister dismisses it. He has been particularly hard on the NDP this week, saying the NDP has asked for more temporary foreign worker support.

He threw that at me one time. In fact, six years ago, I wrote a letter of support for a company in my riding. ExxonMobil needed, for a short period of time, a very specific type of engineering that was within the realm of the company. I wrote a letter of support once for that company for the particular work that it needed done. That is the intent of the program. That is what that was all about. Then the minister gets up, beats his chest, and says, "The member for Cape Breton—Canso supports this program. He wrote a letter of support", and all the backbenchers gloat.

That is what is wrong with it. That is what is wrong with the government. Rather than trying to get to what works for Canadians and supports Canadian enterprise and business, it tries to score these cheap-shot, sucker-punch little answers to stuff like that rather than trying to find some real answers. It is a huge disservice to our country and the people who are trying to do business in this country.

One of the problems—and I am sure I can get support for this not just on the opposition benches but from most Canadians as they realize this now—is that rather than trying to seek out the best evidence and information on which to base some kind of logical decision and way forward on whatever the issue might be, the government will take whatever is in the paper and anecdotally say that this is what the government should be doing. It does this rather than researching the issue and trying to get facts. Everything around job skills development has been based on that type of information rather than on actual labour market data.

### *Business of Supply*

We heard the Prime Minister talk about the skills shortage crisis and say that Canadians have to be seized by this crisis, but we know that opinions from some of the most respected people in this country, such as Don Drummond with TD Economics and most recently the PBO, have all provided actual evidence that debunks the government's approach to the temporary foreign worker program.

In his labour market assessment, the PBO said that Canada is not experiencing a skills and labour shortage but that a higher portion of temporary foreign workers in the private sector could also be putting downward pressure on private sector job vacancies. We see that the C.D. Howe Institute is attributing an increase in unemployment by four percentage points in western Canada right now to the temporary foreign worker programs.

If we were to actually investigate this particular program, as has been requested by the House on a number of occasions over the last number of years, and if recommendations were brought forward to the government and a full debate took place, then we would be serving Canadians. We would provide temporary foreign workers to companies that need them, but we would not be putting downward pressure on wages or putting Canadians out of work. It is shameful what the government has done with this program and the disrepute it has brought upon it.

Liberals will be supporting this particular motion today.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my Liberal colleague that the Conservatives have opened the floodgates to abuses of the temporary foreign worker program. Largely because of the Conservatives' incompetence, many Canadians have lost their jobs and the wages of temporary workers are being driven down.

This is what I wanted to ask my colleague: why has his party abstained from supporting the NDP's previous requests for a review of the program?

[*English*]

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Mr. Speaker, she has caught me off guard here. I know that the government takes all votes in committee. I sit on the standing committee on human resources and skills development. The member might want to have a chat with her colleague, the official critic, on that, because the official critic knows where I stand on the issue of temporary foreign workers.

Again, the proof is in the pudding. We have put this motion before the House before. We have brought motions before the committee before and challenged the government to do what is right and what is best for the businesses in this country that need access to workers and workers who need access to jobs. I will stand today, as I have been, to ask the government to take this issue seriously so that it works for all Canadians.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the member's remarks. The reality is that this is a good program gone astray as a result of the actions of the Conservative government. I can give the member an example, and maybe he could give me some.

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I have constituents who do Anne of Green Gables tours for Japanese tourists. They cannot get enough Japanese-speaking tour guides. They use the labour market opinion to advertise. No one applies, so they have to bring in three tour guides, plus the odd local one that they have.

That exemplifies the purpose of the program. It allows employers, where the skills do not exist in Canada, to be able to attract foreign workers. It actually enhances the economic opportunity of that particular industry, in this case through tour guides for Japanese people visiting the Anne of Green Gables site, one of our highlights on Prince Edward Island.

Is that not the purpose of the program? I agree that abuse in the program needs to be challenged if some industries are trying to use and abuse the workers and lower the cost of labour; I can tell members, though, that in this particular instance, it works well. Is that not what the program was designed to be, an assistance to industry in that regard?

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Mr. Speaker, that pretty much frames the situation. That is exactly how the program should work. Those temporary foreign workers brought in for that short period of time help to support the entire tourism sector in Prince Edward Island. *Anne of Green Gables* is Prince Edward Island. It puts heads in beds. It puts bums in seats at theatres and restaurants. People are buying gas. They are staying in accommodations. That is what it is all about.

I remember the government taking a shot at our leader because he had supported an application by a high-end Japanese restaurant in his riding that needed somebody to come in for a short period of time to pull together the menu and specifically train the kitchen staff. The government said the leader of the Liberal Party was looking for a temporary foreign worker. Yes, he was, and that is how the program is supposed to work.

We need less rhetoric and more study. The government should bring forward some quality recommendations and fix this program for Canadians.

• (1150)

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise in support of the motion by my colleague. It is a very sensible motion, and given the nature of the issues that have been arising over the last couple of months, I think it is well overdue.

I am pleased as well to be sharing my time with the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

It is very clear that there is a need for an audit by the Auditor General. The government speaks in terms of its enforcement regime, but its surveillance of the temporary foreign workers program consists of spot audits commissioned by the companies themselves. It is not that there are any credibility questions related to independent auditors it might hire, but I think there has been enough public attention to this issue for it to be time for the Auditor General to come in and do, as per usual, a fabulous job in auditing federal programs.

What are the issues that we have before us? The first issue, I would suggest, is this: do we even know if we have a labour shortage? Do we have a labour shortage for skilled workers, for the

service sector? Do we even have reliable data? The response to that by some independent bodies, including the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the C.D. Howe Institute, is that we do not.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has reported that Canada has continued excess capacity in the Canadian labour market. He also reported that there was only modest growth in real average wages. He also reported that there is little evidence of a national labour shortage in Canada and that there is no evidence supporting an acute national skills mismatch, except in some specific areas. He singled out some of the sectors in Saskatchewan.

He has also reported that there are lower job vacancy rates and higher unemployment, obviously raising some serious issues about how the temporary foreign worker program is addressing the supply of labour and addressing unemployment in Canada.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has reported that there is a skilled labour shortage of just 32% and an unskilled or semi-skilled labour shortage of 16%. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has suggested the higher proportion of temporary foreign workers in the private sector could be putting downward pressure on private sector job vacancy rates and reducing the number of job vacancies; in other words, it could actually be imperilling the creation of jobs for Canadians, not filling them.

Provincial data also suggests that no provinces are experiencing acute labour shortages or skills mismatches related to the period before the 2008-2009 recession. The C.D. Howe report concurs with the findings of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. It has found little empirical evidence of shortages in many occupations and that the relaxations of conditions for hiring temporary workers resulted in rising unemployment in Alberta and British Columbia.

They suggest that the minimal uniform application fee paid by employers to hire temporary foreign workers offers minimal incentives to seek Canadian workers to fill vacancies. They also found that other countries imposed substantially higher fees, prorated per sector.

In other words, they have identified two problems. One is that there is an across-the-board fee, and if dealing with a big sector like the fossil fuel sector, it is probably not a high enough fee to deter the hiring of temporary foreign workers instead of investing in training or investing in searching for a Canadian employee.

To quote Professor Dominique Gross, the author of the C.D. Howe report:

A successful program would encourage employers to attract and train domestic workers for jobs that are permanent and that ensure stability of their business activity in the short-term. The current Canadian program falls short of these goals.

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Do we have reliable labour and skills data? The Parliamentary Budget Officer and the C.D. Howe Institute say no. Statistics Canada has also now said no. Why? It is because apparently the government, in its wisdom, provided dollars sufficient only to survey employers on work demographics, skills shortages, hiring of temporary foreign workers, and which positions are hard to fill and why. It provided no money to analyze the data and thereby inform the Canadian economy of where there might be gaps, where we might need to be directing our training dollars, whether we needed to give support for mobility, or whether there might be space for temporary foreign workers. Even the minister has been quoted as saying that we must do a better job of collecting detailed labour market information.

• (1155)

The budget was shrunk. For such analyses, it was cut by almost \$30 million, and staff at Statistics Canada was cut by over 18%, so we are not going to immediately address the problem.

What information have we gleaned? Has the temporary foreign worker program impacted wages? According to the information obtained through access to information, the answer to that is, yes, in Alberta. Across the board, it has been revealed that for the service sector, labourers, restaurants, nurseries, farm workers, hotels, casinos, and gas stations, hundreds of unlawful temporary foreign worker permits were issued by the current government at wages below the prevailing wage rate for each of those occupations. That indicates a pattern of using temporary foreign workers to drive down Canadian wages.

This evidence merits broader independent review by the Auditor General.

The minister said that he encourages employers to raise wages. I think perhaps the minister has additional powers. He should be going beyond encouraging Canadian employers to employ Canadians or train them. This evidence suggests that his temporary foreign worker program is having the direct opposite effect.

Third, what has been the effect of the temporary foreign worker program on employment for Canadians in the major employment sector, which the government likes to speak of all the time, the oil sands sector?

The first accelerated program, for which there was no LMO required to hire temporary foreign workers in Alberta, was finally ended, but it was replaced with a pilot program, in other words, no LMO required, and has been recently extended. What has that caused?

As I raised in this place, on behalf of Canadian workers, particularly the ironworkers at two major oil sands projects, Husky Energy and Imperial Oil, 65 Canadian ironworkers were laid off and replaced by Croatian temporary foreign workers, in the case of Imperial Oil. In the case of Husky Energy, 300 Canadian workers were replaced by temporary foreign workers.

In the case of Imperial Oil, I have actually been approached by a number of the workers who have been laid off, who have come to meet with me. One of them is a single mother apprentice.

The current government talks all the time about how it is working hand-in-glove with major industry to encourage the support of

apprenticeships, yet here we have a scenario in which a single mother, who has gone back to school and is apprenticing, was laid off and replaced by a temporary foreign worker.

Why is that serious? It is because apprentices need that work experience to get their tickets.

I also was approached by an aboriginal apprentice who was laid off. He has a young family and is very seriously concerned about the lack of enforcement of this program in the oil sands sector.

I have also been approached by steamfitters apprenticing in the Esso heavy oil sector in Cold Lake, where apparently eight of 11 of the crew are temporary foreign workers, despite the fact that there are many workers, including Albertans, who would like those jobs. The problem is that the sector is moving so fast that rental rates are skyrocketing and there is simply not a place for people to stay, whereas we are enabling temporary foreign workers to come. We pay their travel and in some places subsidize their housing.

I have heard from welders who cannot get work. They have been waiting for a year where jobs are posted, and they have not been taken up.

I have heard from an insulator where 200 jobs were posted and then removed. That person was then told by the company that it was applying for an LMO to fill those jobs.

Where is the oversight? Where is the inspection? Where is the enforcement? Where is the enforcement and compliance strategy?

I have raised this issue repeatedly with the government. An efficacious regulatory program includes good regulations and rules, fully trained inspectors who ensure that those rules are enforced, and an enforcement and compliance strategy that sets forth how exactly they are going to ensure that this program is complied with.

We are told that there is no on-the-ground surveillance program for this sector, so the obvious question is raised. There is a lot of talk about increased penalties. How on earth are they going to assert these penalties, when the only time violations are raised is when workers who are displaced either come to the official opposition or other opposition members or to the media?

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• (1200)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to this member, and she started her comments by asking if we know if we have a labour shortage. I think the implication is that the program should either be discontinued or not there at all.

I would ask the member what she might have to say to the chambers of commerce and the various members of the chambers of commerce in areas like Souris—Moose Mountain, where they are not able to fill positions. One city has over 400 unfilled positions. Estevan has over 1,000-some unfilled positions. Places such as Moosomin, Saskatchewan, cannot attract people to fill many of the food and service industry positions. They are in dire need of people and would hire anyone who might want a job in that industry. They have used them and still cannot fill the positions. There are facilities that have not opened or that cannot remain open to the degree that people would like simply because they cannot fill those jobs.

Do we know if we have a labour shortage? In certain areas of the country, in particular in Souris—Moose Mountain, this is a very important program, and there are significant shortages. What would the member say to that?

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had listened closely, he would have heard not just once but twice that I mentioned that there may be some exceptions where we need to be emphasizing that there may be a need for temporary foreign workers. I mentioned the province of Saskatchewan twice.

The bigger question is whether the government is basing its decision to issue an LMO simply on a company saying, “this is the going rate and this is what we are going to pay our service workers or our oil and gas workers”.

In the case of Alberta, it has been discovered that, in fact, employers have been undercutting salaries. The government has been inappropriately issuing LMOs and driving down salaries.

There can be many reasons for a labour shortage. Maybe the salaries are not appropriate. Maybe there is no appropriate housing or people do not want to relocate. There are a lot of issues. Of course, we have raised the issue of a shortage of affordable housing in this country.

The issues the member raised are exactly what we would like the Auditor General to take a look at. Where exactly are the labour shortages? Do we have enough data on that? Do we need to be supporting Statistics Canada actually starting to analyze the data? Where are the problems with this temporary foreign worker program?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the member's reference to the Auditor General. In terms of the abuse that has taken place within the program over the last number of years, especially given the heightened attention the issue has been given in recent months, there is a general lack of confidence among many Canadians in terms of the temporary foreign worker program.

One way to deal with that issue is to turn to a body Canadians have a deep amount of respect for, that being the Auditor General's office. I would ask the member if she would agree that having the

Auditor General directly involved in reviewing the program and coming up with recommendations as to how the program can be fixed would be the best way to try to fix this problem.

• (1205)

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, clearly I agree, because that is precisely what our motion is. It is to call on the Auditor General to do a program audit of the entire temporary foreign worker program.

However, there is more the government can do in tandem, in parallel, with the work of the Auditor General. For example, it could genuinely step up an enforcement regime. There is actually no on-the-ground surveillance regime for this temporary foreign worker program. The government simply sits back and waits for complaints.

I am informed that the government actually brought the border guards in to deal with McDonald's, which is pretty incredible.

While there is a lot of talk about the penalties, what we do not have is an inspectorate under this program, under labour or immigration or wherever the government wants to have it. They would be people who were fully trained and deployed full time to the regions where there are major numbers of temporary foreign workers.

There is a lot that could be done. We fully support an audit by the Auditor General. There is a lot the government could do. It is the government's responsibility to deliver a credible program that does not prejudice Canadian workers.

**Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I stand in support of the motion by the hon. member for Newton—North Delta:

That, in the opinion of the House, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program has been open to abuse resulting in the firing of qualified Canadian workers, lower wages and the exploitation of temporary foreign workers, and therefore the government should: (a) impose an immediate moratorium on the Stream for Lower-skilled Occupations, which includes fast-food, service and restaurant jobs; and (b) request an urgent audit of the whole program by the Auditor General.

I want to first deal with abuse within the temporary foreign worker program. There have been complaints across the country, but my perspective is the Newfoundland and Labrador perspective, with particular emphasis on my riding of St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

The first time I heard of abuse of the temporary foreign worker program was in December 2012, when the Atlantic New Democratic caucus travelled to Labrador West for meetings. We heard horror stories at the time, and I described them at the time as horror stories, about more than 20 temporary foreign workers living in a single home. We went public then with the story. I listened to the CBC radio clip again just this morning. It is available on the web.

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It was not until November 2013, 11 months later, that Canada Border Services Agency executed a warrant at a Labrador City residence as part of an investigation into housing arrangements for temporary foreign workers. It was not until April 2014, earlier this month, 16 months after our caucus went public with the alleged abuse, that the Conservative government suspended two Labrador City residents from the temporary foreign worker program. It was 16 months later.

Four former employees of the two restaurants told CBC News that 26 foreign workers had shared one Labrador City split-level residence for months, in violation of the employers' agreement with the federal government, in violation of every law.

That was the first case. My office has dealt with numerous cases.

Another complaint was received by my office in early 2012 from the parent of a young person who worked at a McDonald's in St. John's. It was alleged that the young person's hours of work were cut back when the restaurant brought in temporary foreign workers. The parent explained that temporary foreign workers were guaranteed a set number of hours as a condition of their being brought in and at the expense of our local young people.

Yet another complaint was reported by my office, this time in late 2012, and it involved five Guatemalan labourers employed as chicken catchers. They had two complaints. First, they alleged that they were not paid but were promised that they would be paid before coming to work in Newfoundland and Labrador. The pay was the first complaint. They alleged that they were paid less than their Canadian counterparts for the same work.

The other complaint had to do with living conditions. My staff visited the basement apartment where they were lodged, and we took pictures. We also brought in the local newspaper, which wrote an article on the plight of the Guatemalan workers. Let me quote from that article:

The five workers say they were living in subpar conditions in the basement of a company-owned Mount Pearl house, sharing a tiny, ill-equipped kitchen, living with mould and holes in the ceiling that dripped water, and sleeping on filthy mattresses. Each was charged \$80 a week for the basement apartment for a total of \$1,600 a month. When they complained, one worker said he was told it must be better than his house in Guatemala.

One of the points I made to the media at that time, in December 2012, was that there is no oversight in Canada when it comes to temporary foreign workers, no federal oversight. The provincial labour department looked into complaints by the Guatemalan workers that they were not paid what they were promised they would be paid. All the provincial government could do, and it tried its best, was ensure that foreign workers were at least paid the minimum wage.

• (1210)

As for the living conditions, where they were forced to live in squalor, we went to the local municipality and the Consulate of Guatemala in Montreal. Repairs were eventually made to the basement apartment, but what became of the five Guatemalans? They went home and they have not returned. They were afraid that as a result of complaining there would be repercussions, and there were repercussions.

My point is this. The federal government runs the temporary foreign worker program and it should investigate when there are complaints about pay and living conditions, when there are complaints, period. My office could not find anyone federally to investigate.

I received two more complaints in recent days. One complaint is from an unemployed aircraft technician who says that temporary foreign workers are replacing locals who are ready, willing and able to work. We referred that complaint to Employment and Social Development Canada. The answering machine said that it would not provide any feedback or give any update as a result of the information we submitted. Where is the accountability? There is none.

The other complaint was from a former employee of McDonald's in St. John's, but I will save that quote until the end.

The temporary foreign worker program has grown to outrageous proportions. It has pushed down wages and resulted in Canadians being let go or forced to move on and replaced with foreign workers. The number of temporary foreign workers in Newfoundland and Labrador jumped from 916 in 2006 to 1,392 in 2010. That is a growth of almost 500 workers in the span of four years. At the same time, according to Statistics Canada, our youth unemployment rate in Newfoundland and Labrador as of this month stands at 20.2%, the highest in the country. Less than 50% of youth aged 15 to 24 were employed in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2013.

What are we doing with temporary foreign workers? There is a need. All sides of this honourable House admit that there is a need. However, the temporary foreign worker program is not administered in the best interests of foreign workers to ensure that those foreign workers are paid fairly and have decent living conditions.

The temporary foreign worker program is also not administered in the best interests of Canadians, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It is not addressing unemployment. If anything, it is driving down wages and taking away work from our own.

The Conservative employment minister brought down a moratorium late last week on the use of temporary foreign workers in restaurants. That does not go far enough. The moratorium should be on all lower skilled occupations until the Conservative government fixes the program and there is an independent review by the Auditor General of Canada of the entire kit and caboodle.

Let me now return to that second complaint that I received in recent days. I want to end with a quote from that complaint. The letter states:

To be blunt, if business owners viewed staff as more than indebted serfs and did the right thing and actually paid better wages and took better care of their staff there would be less turnover, happier more productive staff and to the benefit of Newfoundland's tax base, less out migration.

• (1215)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by the member and would ask him to provide further comment on this.

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When we talk about the importance of the temporary foreign worker, we need to recognize that quite often there is an exploitation that occurs of that foreign worker. This is something that is very easily overlooked. As much as we are primarily concerned about the loss of potential employment opportunities for Canadians, that other side of the potential abuse of the foreign workers who arrive in Canada should also be taking place in this debate. Would the member provide his comments on that issue?

**Mr. Ryan Cleary:** Mr. Speaker, as I outlined in my speech, my office has received a half a dozen complaints so far from Canadians, from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, who have a problem with the fact that their hours have been cut back as a result of temporary foreign workers who have been brought in. We have received complaints from temporary foreign workers themselves, but they have been reluctant to come forward to speak about exploitation because they are afraid of repercussions.

In the case of the Guatemalan workers whom I referenced in my speech, they came forward with complaints. The media did a bit of an exposé on their situation and on their allegations. They eventually went home and they have not returned, which is what they were afraid of in the first place. There is exploitation in terms of housing, wages and hours of work.

Another point I made in my speech was that when there were complaints, there was no federal arm to investigate.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He provided a good explanation of two problems with this program in its current form.

The Conservatives are rather quiet right now but, when they had the opportunity, they said that the NDP was against this program. They were talking out of both sides of their mouths because they were inviting foreign workers to Canada while criticizing the program.

As my colleague alluded to, accepting temporary foreign workers is not necessarily the problem. Instead, the Conservatives should be focusing on the major flaws of the program, which emerge after each crisis and which the Conservative government has not managed to fix.

After all these years hearing such incredible stories as the ones my colleague mentioned today, we have to stop and thoroughly review this program, so that we can ensure good working conditions for the temporary foreign workers we accept while preventing them from taking Canadians' jobs.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ryan Cleary:** Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank the hon. member for bringing up that point because I want to highlight it. The New Democratic Party of Canada, Her Majesty's official opposition, is not against the temporary foreign worker program. We are against the exploitation of temporary foreign workers. We are against temporary foreign workers being paid less than Canadians. We are against temporary foreign workers being housed in squalor, being forced to sleep on filthy mattresses in apartments where the ceiling is

falling down and the water is pouring in. We are against up to 26 temporary foreign workers being forced to live in a single home.

We are not against the temporary foreign worker program. We are against how temporary foreign workers are being treated. We are against how the Conservative Government of Canada has allowed this program to spin out of control.

● (1220)

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to the NDP motion concerning the temporary foreign worker program. I will be sharing my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour.

We have all been concerned about the recent allegations of abuse in the program. I am pleased to speak about the strong action that the Minister of Employment and the government have taken. The temporary foreign worker program should only be used as a last and limited resort, when Canadians are not available. Employers should also be committed to attracting Canadians, to raising wages, improving working conditions and investing in training for workers. Our government is very concerned that some of the employers are not doing enough to hire Canadians and are even abusing the temporary foreign worker program.

Canadians are telling us that they are concerned that the program is being misused by some employers. They are questioning the use of the program in certain areas and certain sectors. Our government takes such allegations very seriously. That this program could be used to displace Canadian workers and suppress wages is unacceptable, to say the least, and we will not stand for it. That is why we have been taking steps to ensure that the program does not negatively impact the ability of Canadians to find jobs and that those that abuse the program will face the full consequences of the law.

That is why we introduced a number of reforms, which the opposition has voted against at every opportunity. In April 2013, we made sure that employers using the program paid temporary foreign workers a prevailing wage, consistent with what Canadians receive. We suspended the accelerated labour market opinion process. We added new questions to the employer application as part of the labour market opinion process. This way, when employers bring in temporary foreign workers, no Canadian workers are displaced as a result of outsourcing.

We also improved and clarified language requirements. Now French and English are the only languages that can be identified as a job requirement, unless another language is essential to the job itself, as it might be to a translator, for example. That has been raised in the House.

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We also introduced processing fees for employers applying for temporary foreign workers so that the cost of labour market opinions would no longer be paid for by hard-working taxpayers. We also improved recruitment and advertisement requirements to almost double the reach of employers' advertising efforts. This ensures that Canadians have a better chance to learn about and apply for available jobs.

We continue to take action to strengthen the integrity of the temporary foreign worker program. Late last year our government announced further measures. These include regulatory and administrative changes that give the Government of Canada the authority to do four things: first, to conduct inspections to ensure employers are meeting the conditions of the program; second, to ban non-compliant employers from the program for two years and immediately add their names to a public blacklist; third, to further improve the criteria to assess LMOs so Canadians are always first in line for every available job; and fourth, to immediately revoke or suspend LMOs, to refuse to process LMO applications and to revoke and refuse to process work permits when necessary. These measures serve one primary purpose: to ensure Canadians remain first in line for jobs.

However, we are not done and there are more reforms to come. We have repeatedly warned employers that the temporary foreign worker program must only be used as a last resort, when Canadians are not available. Therefore, we will not hesitate to make examples out of rule breakers.

In recent weeks, our government has been made aware of some serious allegations of the abuse of the temporary foreign worker program. We immediately asked officials to investigate these matters and determine the facts. As a result, labour market opinions were suspended and the employers in question were placed on the blacklist. Nevertheless, there remain serious concerns regarding the use of the program in the food services sector.

● (1225)

Until these concerns can be laid to rest, our government has placed a moratorium on the food services sector's access to the program. That means departmental officials will not process any new or pending LMO applications related to the food services sector. In addition, any unfilled positions tied to a previously approved LMO will be suspended. This moratorium will remain in effect until we have completed our ongoing review of the program.

This clear, decisive action demonstrates that any abuse of the temporary foreign worker program will not be tolerated by our Conservative government. We will continue to investigate any and all allegations of misuse, and any employer found to have violated these rules will face serious consequences. In fact, we encourage anyone who has any concerns to contact Service Canada's confidential tip line at 1-866-602-9448 or [integrity@servicecanada.gc.ca](mailto:integrity@servicecanada.gc.ca).

Those employers who are found to have lied about their efforts to hire Canadians could face criminal prosecution, including fines and jail time.

All these measures, combined, demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that employers hire Canadians first. We believe that

employers must do more by raising wages, improving working conditions, and investing more in training for Canadian workers.

If opposition members were serious about reforming this program, they would have voted for all the reforms we have already brought in. Instead, we see the NDP and the Liberals keeping on asking for more TFWs for their ridings.

Let me read a list of all of the opposition MPs who have asked for more TFWs.

For the NDP: the deputy leader and MP for Vancouver East, the MP for Halifax, the MP for Ottawa Centre, the MP for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, the MP for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, the MP for Sackville—Eastern Shore, the MP for Churchill, the MP for Victoria, the MP for Trois-Rivières, the MP for British Columbia Southern Interior, the MP for Laval, and the MP for Brome—Missisquoi.

For the Liberals: the leader, the House leader and MP for Beauséjour, the deputy House leader and MP for Winnipeg North, the MP for Random—Burin—St. George's, the MP for Cape Breton—Canso, the MP for Mount Royal, and the MP for Sydney—Victoria.

These opposition MPs must not just talk the talk, they must walk the walk. Rather than contributing to the problem, the opposition should be supporting our reforms.

We also know where we stand: break the rules and one will face serious criminal consequences. We are already taking the necessary action, and we will take further steps to make sure the program is fixed. That is why I will not be supporting the NDP motion.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the problem is that we know, because of the egregious reports from the media from coast to coast to coast, that there have been serious abuses of this program. However, one area in which I do not see the government taking responsibility is in the fact that it is the government that gives out the LMOs.

I looked up the Victoria situation where LMOs were given out to McDonald's. This is a city with high youth unemployment. What kind of a common-sense approach was taken in an area with high youth unemployment that LMOs were approved for temporary foreign workers? What kind of improvements would the government make to the LMOs and take responsibility for them?

Second, would my colleague agree that an audit is a good beginning to fixing the program?

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•(1230)

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the proportion of labour market needs is different in different regions of our country; yet we are designing a program that tries to fit across the nation. Of course, we are a national government and we want to try to put in place programs that are equal across the nation. That is why we have taken steps now to suspend and put a moratorium on the introduction of new temporary foreign workers, and to provide opportunities for a correction process to be put in place. We have done this because we have listened to Canadians.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, we want to what is best for Canadians. Decisions have to be made based on actual evidence. Could my colleague share with us what bank of evidence the government would have gone to two and a half years ago to go forward with an accelerated LMO process and the ability to pay 15% less to temporary foreign workers than to Canadian workers? Did it use the same bank of data and information to revoke those initial changes that it had put in? Where is the reference to the data?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, the member heard my comments and those of my predecessors here today, including the minister in charge, that we have suspended the accelerated labour market opinion process. That is so we can learn from the process that will take place with regard to listening to Canadians further across our nation before the moratorium may be lifted, or to see what types of improvement may be made to a very successful program in many areas of Canada.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to rise in the House to address concerns raised regarding the temporary foreign worker program. However, before we can address these concerns, we need a clear understanding of what those concerns are, and I want to be absolutely clear that Canadians must always be first in line for the available jobs.

The temporary foreign worker program exists for one reason, and one reason only: to be a temporary, last resort solution when qualified Canadians are not available at the moment. There are times when Canada's labour supply cannot always meet the needs of businesses in this country, but that does not change the facts. Canadians must always—I reiterate, must always—be first in line for available jobs.

Over the last few weeks, Employment and Skills Development Canada has been made aware of some serious allegations of employers' abuse of this program. Again, our position is very clear. Our government will not tolerate any abuse of this program. When the Minister of Employment and Social Development heard disturbing allegations about the hiring practices of a McDonald's franchise in Victoria, he took immediate action. Inspectors were on site within 24 hours; all labour market opinions in process for this franchise were suspended pending the outcome of the investigation; and it has been publicly blacklisted. Other allegations are being investigated on an urgent basis.

These actions, coupled with last week's suspension of the food services sector's access to the temporary foreign worker program, have made it clear that we do not take allegations of abuse lightly.

The temporary foreign worker program remains under ongoing review, and until that review is completed, the food services industry faces a moratorium, given the increasing number of disturbing allegations concerning the use of this program. Our government repeatedly warned employers that the temporary foreign worker program must only be used as a last and limited resort when Canadians are not available. Even in spite of this, serious concerns remained.

While opposition members still cry foul, they have been asking for foreign workers for businesses in their own ridings. Members of the opposition, NDP and third party Liberals, have regularly made these requests. Our government recognizes that there are challenges in today's economy posed by employers being unable to find workers, but when opposition MPs make these requests, they often do so for businesses that have already been denied labour market opinions because they could not demonstrate that Canadians were genuinely unavailable. The answers to such problems should not be to seek the ear of the government. It is for employers to raise wages for Canadians to attract them to the jobs. Our government has said this before, and I am saying it again.

Not long ago in this very place, the Minister of Employment and Social Development noted that a member of the opposition asked for temporary foreign workers for a hotel whose labour market opinion was rejected. Then there is the Liberal Party, which many times asked for temporary foreign workers for a restaurant because of the famous Hollywood celebrities who frequent it. This restaurant, too, had its request for temporary foreign workers turned down by existing program standards. I would remind the opposition that the point of using the temporary foreign worker program is to be temporary only until Canadians are found, not in place of them.

I want to provide a quick example. In British Columbia, there are very significant concerns in terms of a mine with language requirements. That was clearly something that disturbed British Columbians. I want to contrast that with a recent announcement I made with the First Nations Employment Society, which is an organization responsible for supporting aboriginals in the labour market. We were providing funds three years in advance of when Seaspan was looking toward having to build the ships for which it has a contract. It is looking at training local Canadians and recognizes that it is going to have a need. It really supports how we are going to go about training young Canadians from across the country in terms of meeting those needs now. That is a very important piece. Businesses and organizations should be projecting what their needs are and actually having a plan in terms of how they are going to get the employees they need.



To go back to the temporary foreign worker program, we have taken steps to ensure that this program continues to work the way it is supposed to, and there will be serious consequences, including jail time, for those who try to use it in ways it was never meant for.

• (1235)

As announced in economic action plan 2013, we are taking action to reform the temporary foreign worker program to ensure that Canadians continue to be given the first chance at available jobs. The results of these changes have strengthened and will continue to strengthen and improve the program to support economic recovery and growth and ensure that more employers hire Canadians before temporary foreign workers.

Just last April we eliminated the wage flexibility to make sure that employers use the prevailing wage consistent with what Canadians receive.

We have ensured employers maintain a workplace free from abuse, a safe and secure working environment for foreign workers who are here under the program.

We have accelerated the accelerated labour market opinion.

Our government has added new questions to the labour market opinion application process to make sure no Canadians are displaced as a result of this outsourcing.

Similar to the issue that I mentioned a few minutes ago, we have made changes to ensure that French and English are the only language requirements that are identified.

Our government has introduced a processing fee so that the cost of moving the temporary foreign worker program forward is no longer absorbed by taxpayers but by employers. This means a better outcome for employers and a fair system that keeps job-seeking Canadians at the front of the line.

Late last year we also made changes that empower the government to do four things. First, we are able to do inspections to make sure employers are meeting the conditions of the program, which is very important. Second, we are now able to ban employers who abuse the system from the program for two years and immediately put their names on a blacklist. Third, we have strengthened the criteria for assessing labour market opinions. Fourth, our government has the power to revoke or suspend LMOs and work permits and refuse to process LMO applications.

Canadians must always be first in line for available jobs. That is our message to employers and it is a clear and unambiguous message. If the opposition has any doubt about that, it can talk to the food service industry.

Our government will continue to ensure employers make greater effort to recruit and train Canadians. We will continue to remind them of the program's intention. It is a last and limited resort when Canadian workers are not available.

• (1240)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question to my friend across the way is quite specific. What took the government so long?

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In 2009 the Auditor General pointed out significant and serious problems. As my colleague said in her comments, this program should be the place of last resort. For over five years the government has known that is not how the program has been used. For over five years the government has known that the program has been abused. Suddenly the government has found religion on this issue and I cannot help but think it is connected to the headlines that have suddenly hit the newspapers about the most egregious abuses.

How is my colleague able to rationalize her government's promotion of this program? The government spent Canadian taxpayers' money promoting the program. How can her government justify allowing it to be abused for so long when the C.D. Howe Institute of all places has said that the program has had a suppressive effect on wages and a negative effect on those seeking employment?

For a government that is supposed to be concerned about jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity, does the temporary foreign worker program fit into that mantra that it has repeated ad nauseam without any actual effect behind it?

Does the government take any responsibility for the program that it has allowed to be abused and has taken five years to correct once it was—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, I find it incredibly ironic that the member can stand up in the House and talk about this program when many opposition members have begged the minister to have this program in their own ridings. They have said the program is needed.

We really need to reflect on this issue. There is a true need for this program. It has been around for some time. Some places in this country have issues in terms of employers being able to fill positions, so therefore we need to hit the appropriate balance.

Again, it is hypocritical for opposition members to suggest that their party does not support this program and they do not want temporary foreign workers in their ridings.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives like to say that this is an isolated incident and that they have taken corrective action but we know better. We have seen it in the mining sector, the banking sector, the service sector and so on.

I have a fundamental question for my colleague. One in seven jobs that has been created in this country has gone to a temporary foreign worker. Is my colleague comfortable with that? Does she feel that is right?

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, what I am very comfortable with is if every Canadian who would like that job has been given the opportunity and that if there is no one available the temporary foreign worker program fills an important gap and role in helping our businesses in a temporary nature. Again, what we need to do is recognize that Canadians absolutely should have the first opportunity for every job. There are occasions when our employers across the country have true issues in terms of their businesses, and this program is there to fill that gap.

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**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I must admit to being somewhat surprised by the comments from the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, a member of the New Democratic caucus.

I recall, just a few months ago, appearing before the heritage committee when the NDP heritage critic berated me, as did the other New Democratic MPs, for the temporary foreign worker program. This is all on the record in the public domain. They berated me for the temporary foreign worker program being too bureaucratic, too slow-moving, too many checks and balances, and too much scrutiny and oversight. It is absolutely true and on the record that the New Democrats wanted rapid, almost unlimited access for the computer gaming industry, particularly in Montreal, to access high-skilled temporary foreign workers.

I had the heritage critic for the NDP criticizing this government for not exempting foreign musicians coming to Canada from the requirement for a labour market opinion. Guess what? This government's position was endorsed by the Canadian musicians' union, which thought that the NDP was being too lax in its policy on the program.

Does the member think it is not peculiar that the New Democrats say one thing in this debate, but quite something else whenever it comes to an interest group that they favour?

• (1245)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, again what is happening here is that the minister is just pointing out the hypocritical nature of the debate here. Again, we have a program that fills a gap, we need to ensure it is working right, and we need to ensure that all Canadians have the first opportunity for the available jobs.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am intrigued by the minister's and the Conservatives' comments, simply because a system that the Conservatives allowed to be exploited is somehow the NDP's fault, a system that the Liberals created, let's give fair attribution.

I will be splitting my time with my friend from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

It is fascinating how, when the Conservatives get caught doing wrong, their first reaction is not to fix the problem, it is to look for someone to blame. We saw it with the so-called minister of undemocratic reform, saying that the problem was the head of Elections Canada. Sheila Fraser is the problem. The problem is the NDP, not his bill. His bill was perfect. The Conservatives' first instinct is to blame others, rather than take any kind of responsibility for a program that they allowed to explode. The minister allowed it to explode under his watch, yet somehow it is somebody else's fault.

Growing up in politics means that we take ownership from time to time of decisions that we make. The Conservatives do not want to take ownership of this decision because the economic impacts on Canadians, on wages, and on the job vacancy rate have been real, and have helped contribute in their own way to the significant problems that the middle-class working Canadians have faced. These problems are that real wages have been stagnant for almost a generation, that we are seeing incredibly high debt loads, and that we

are seeing Canadians time and again working harder just to stay in the same place.

The temporary foreign worker program, in a sense, has become the poster child for bad Conservative management of the economy. The Conservatives allowed a program that was meant to be awfully specific, as the minister said. It should be legal, it should be fair, and it should be rare, as opposed to how the Conservatives applied it, where they sped up the process for LMOs to 10 days and allowed companies to slip through the program without any real scrutiny.

We saw it in the most egregious cases. Was it HD Mining? The minister will remind me. It was allowed permits for 200 miners to work in Canada, with almost no scrutiny from the federal government at all.

The government can only play a certain role in our economy, and it should only play a certain role, but one of them is looking out for the public interest. I represent northwestern British Columbia. It is a beautiful place that is resource rich. Oftentimes, when I meet with resource companies, one of the arguments that they use, which is a pretty good one, is to say that these are jobs that cannot be exported. When we are knocking down trees, mining, or fishing, these are jobs that we just physically cannot export. Somehow, the Conservatives found a way to export these jobs too.

We would think that service industry jobs, ones where we have to deal with a customer face to face, rather than telephone banking where people sit on the phones waiting, could not be exported because they have to be done here in Canada. That way, if the economy does well, Canadians should do well. However, Conservatives have somehow ended up creating a system allowing it to be exploited so that even if the economy were to pick up, Canadians would not receive the full benefit.

It is so similar to the Conservatives' policies on resource management in general. Conservatives are very happy with a "rip and ship" attitude to just drop the raw resources and send them somewhere else to have the value added there, not deriving the full benefit that we could, whether it is the mining, oil or forestry industries, all the way down the line. For those watching and listening to this debate who live in the city, and are not connected to the resource sector, know that the cities of this country, which are the economic engines, only survive because of the fuel and energy that are supplied by the rural parts of this country, the resource areas, the agriculture, mining, forestry, and oil sectors. Without the two working in conjunction for a fair and better economy, it is going to be very difficult.

The exploitation of this system cuts both ways. One would argue that the abuses upon the Canadian worker in suppressing and keeping Canadian wages down has a serious and significant effect. It is part of the reason why Canadians have one of the highest personal debt rates in the world. It is one of the reasons why real wages, when adjusted for inflation, have not moved much at all for 35 years. It is one of the reasons why Canadians, when asked about the hope for the next generation, are feeling more and more pessimistic about the opportunities for their children and grandchildren.

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All of this has been aided and abetted by bad Conservative policies. They are policies that have gone to such an extreme that only with screaming headlines in the national media do the Conservatives actually react. The minister knows that the Auditor General's report of 2009 pointed out serious problems with the program that he allowed to expand. Did he react? Did he take charge of the situation, and say that this was hurting the Canadian economy, that he would step in and take some ownership? He did not.

●(1250)

We saw the Conservatives making these so-called tough efforts, taking this issue seriously in 2011 when they introduced the blacklist. I am curious if the minister can update us on, since 2011, how many companies ended up on this blacklist for abusing the program? If there are no companies on the blacklist, one would then assume that the program is not being abused.

In Alberta alone, there were only 100 cases last year. Only in the last 30 days has a company ended up on this blacklist. So much for tough-on-crime Conservatives. They really get out there and get tough when it is white collar crime.

Here is the foundation of this, which I am sure frustrates many Conservative-minded people. One would assume that those who sit within the Conservative cabinet would hold Conservative principles toward the economy, such principles as supply and demand, that if an employer is unable to find employees when offering a contract, then that employer would then have a couple of choices: not filling the position or raising the offer.

CEOs of major corporations in our country make that argument all the time. The Conservative government makes that argument when justifying the bonuses it pays to top civil servants, the argument that if we want to attract the best, we have to pay them, that if we want to get better and better people, we have to compensate them accordingly.

However, that same measure does not apply to people who are not in the Conservative world view of being important, people working in the service sector, people working in some of the industries that we have been talking about. When companies come to them and say that they simply cannot find any Canadians willing to accept this wage, the Conservatives tell them that they have a solution and that they will make this temporary foreign worker program.

Today, and every day, 300,000 people went to work under this program in Canada. That is an estimate, by the way. Actual numbers from the Conservatives are a bit like a unicorn, mythological. Every once in a while they make reference to them, but no one has ever actually seen the numbers.

It seems that when one tries to break apart the ideology behind this, it is not a Conservative ideology. It is actually quite a radical ideology that says that the market forces in play should not be allowed to exert their pressures in a natural way, that if employers are offering a wage at a certain level and nobody fills the position, that the employer then has to adjust their offer.

I was in small business before politics. It was pretty obvious to me. It seemed to work out well for most of the successful businesses I knew.

This labour shortage mantra that the minister and others have been ranting about to justify this program has also been shown not to be entirely true. The Parliamentary Budget Office is an office created by the Conservatives. I think they regret that day. I think they regret the day they actually sought to have truth in accounting for government, which was a Reform idea. Every time the Parliamentary Budget Office offers truth to the Conservatives' ideology, they simply reject the evidence that is before them.

Increasingly, from the cancellation of the long-form census to the absolute miserable labour market data that we have in our country, which is decreasingly reliable, it seems the Conservatives much prefer that ideology over evidence. If the evidence does not fit the ideology, well then they just ignore the evidence.

We see this right now with the Conservative promise for income splitting. It is a \$5 billion to \$6 billion promise. It is not cheap. It will affect, and help, 14% of Canadians. Eighty-six per cent of Canadians will never see a benefit from this promise. The former finance minister, Hon. Jim Flaherty, a good man, well remembered since his tragic passing, argued publicly and in speeches that this was a very costly program that would not benefit everyone.

Instead of listening to the evidence of his own finance minister and the evidence of economists, as well as the actual hard numbers available, the Conservatives continue the mantra that it must be good because they say it is good. The temporary foreign worker program, again, should be legal, fair and rare, as opposed to the way the Conservatives have allowed abuses to go on.

The minister is going to get up and make all sorts of protestations about the NDP doing this and that, and yet never has there been a moment when I heard him take responsibility for his own creation, his own part in the allowance of the abuses that have gone on under his watch in a program that he augmented and increased. That is a shame. Denial is a long river in Egypt. He should do better on this and actually own up to what he helped create.

●(1255)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the member actually wants a debate based on facts and not facile political rhetoric, I would invite him to look at the facts of the program. To be absolutely honest, not many people do this because it is complex. Within what we call the temporary foreign worker program, which I think is a misnomer, there are actually a whole lot of different programs.

I wonder if the member would care to reflect on this. For example, is he aware that 62% of the so-called temporary foreign workers, who are foreign nationals getting work permits in Canada, are coming through streams that do not require labour market opinions, typically things like, for example, high-skilled intercompany transferees, or an executive comes in for a few months, or a lawyer comes up to work on a deal or a university brings in a foreign researcher. I have never heard any objections about this.

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I am wondering honestly, and let us try to put the politics on the low dial for a moment, does he object to streams like that? Does he object to the international experience Canada programs, which are based on reciprocal agreements we have with various countries that allow young Canadians to work abroad for a few months and vice versa? That is actually one-quarter of the program and represents half of the growth and the flow of TFWs to Canada. Is the member focused on any particular stream? Is it low-skilled with LMO, or is it so broad that he objects to even the high-skilled reciprocal kind?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I repeated twice in my speech for the minister. We believe the program should be legal, fair, rare and specified. The minister has not read the motion that is in front of us. I know he is a busy guy, but it is what we are debating today. I believe the minister used some patrimonial lines toward me as he started his comments and now he does not like getting any of it back. He can choose whether he agrees with the motion as it is stated or not.

The minister is asking me if we want to abolish the program entirely. I am not sure if I read that in the motion before us today. He can insinuate that it is, and the Conservatives have. The talking points from the PMO have clearly told Conservatives that this is the approach they should take rather than the facts as the minister likes to say. The facts are right in the motion before us. If the minister does not agree with the motion before us, of course he will vote against it. He had another opportunity here to take some ownership of the exploitation that he knows and has finally acknowledged has gone on in the program.

Has the minister acknowledged that the exploitation has gone on? Of course he has, because the Conservatives have just put a temporary ban on service sector workers in the fast food industry. Obviously it was exploited. Obviously it was under his watch. Obviously at some point he should take some ownership for the actions that were of his own creation. There are the politics, there is the reality, he could own up to it.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will adopt the approach the minister has taken to take the politics out of this and look at the facts. He referenced the reciprocal agreement with other nations where Canadians could go to a specific nation and it in turn could send people to Canada.

If he thinks that program is working really well, we know that there are about 380 Croatians working in Canada. Meanwhile there are four Canadians working in Croatia. He can check the order paper. These are actually stats. My numbers are off a bit, but about 700 people from Poland are working here and about 4 Canadians are working in Poland. We are getting jacked on those beautiful arrangements too. Therefore, let us take the politics out of this.

I am going to defend my NDP colleagues for a second. The Conservatives have attacked the NDP for soliciting support. There are aspects of this program that are essential to maintaining Canadian jobs, and I stand by that. However, let us open this up. Let us fix this problem so it serves Canadians and not discriminates against them or hurts them.

• (1300)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend across the way because what I have noticed from the Conservatives, and the

minister in particular, is that they have chosen to say two things which are not true. One is that the NDP wants to get rid of the program, full stop. That is clearly not what the motion says today. My colleague from Newton—North Delta has been explicitly clear, yet Conservatives perpetuate the lie again and again.

The second thing is that I have had a number of colleague who have gone to clarify where an application for foreign temporary worker program is, a specific application to the minister. He has flipped that around and said that the NDP is begging him for this. That is hypocritical.

My friend talked about reciprocity, and I would welcome the minister and any of his colleagues to talk about reciprocity. If they want to talk about the actual motion we are dealing with to make the program actually work, because we think it is a program that could work rather than the rhetoric from the Conservatives, we welcome it. However, if they are going to vote against this motion, that speak volumes to where the Conservatives are right now, which is caught having caused great harm to the Canadian economy and unwilling to this point to even own up to a little of it.

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise to speak to this opposition day motion, and I want to start by stating the obvious: that as Canadians we are, apart from first nations, a nation of immigrants and refugees. Those of us who arrived here first have always been very welcoming of those who come after. We have always welcomed those who want to come here to build the country and create stability for their families, and in doing so, create a loyalty to Canada.

Now we are in the unfortunate situation where we have expanded the temporary foreign worker program so much that each year we have more and more temporary foreign workers and we have more temporary foreign workers in the country than we have immigrants every year.

Despite long wait lists for immigration by those who would love to come to Canada to make a solid future here, despite long wait lists for family reunification for people who have been waiting years for their parents or their children to come here, it is very hard for me to see how we have arrived in the situation where immigrants are still waiting to have their applications considered for six, eight, ten years, where the Conservatives have simply thrown away applications, just cancelled them, from skilled workers who want to come to this country.

It is very hard for me to see how we got to where we are today, other than to say that clearly the Conservatives have put a wrong emphasis on the temporary foreign worker program rather than on immigration and family reunification. This is an emphasis that I think most Canadians, if they were they aware of it, would never support.

We have been a welcoming country. We want people to come and join us here. We recognize that long-term immigrants will help to build a better future for all of us and a better future for their families.

*Business of Supply*

We all know the experiences other countries have had when they have created guest worker programs, especially those in Europe, where they deny people long-term rights to be part of society, to be part of the country in which they are working. I belong to the school of thought to which I think most Canadians belong. If people are good enough to come and work here every day, then they are good enough to stay here and share Canada with us.

I am not opposed to the temporary foreign worker program. As my hon. colleague who spoke before me said, there are some legitimate skills shortages in our economy that need to be filled on a temporary basis. All New Democrats accept that. If highly-skilled, specialized people are needed and a search has been done for Canadians and no one is found, none of us on this side would object to filling those jobs temporarily with foreign workers. However, we do not support a program that displaces Canadian residents and denies access to entry level jobs to both youth and to new Canadians.

We have high youth unemployment rates in my community. We have high unemployment rates for first nations. We have high unemployment rates for new Canadians, all of whom would like access to those entry level jobs to get a start on their future for them and their families. Instead, their future is being blocked by the very large numbers of temporary foreign workers in my community.

We have called for a moratorium for the issuance of permits for lower skilled occupations: those in fast food and those in the service industry. Why have we done this? As we have said, there is a need for a pause here to conduct an audit and to let us have a look at the impact of this vast expansion of the temporary foreign worker program.

It is not that we do not have evidence already. The CD Howe Institute, a group which I, like most New Democrats, usually do not cite, did a study on the impact on British Columbia and Alberta on the presence of temporary foreign workers. Its findings were very specific. It found that the unemployment rate had been driven up by perhaps as much as 4% by the presence of temporary foreign workers. It also found that the impact of temporary foreign workers was to depress wages.

In those sectors of our economy where people are having trouble hiring employees, the normal thing we would see is an increase in wages in those jobs to attract people to the job. Instead, those positions are being filled by temporary foreign workers.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer, whose office the Conservatives must regret having created, is an independent officer of Parliament who works from the facts. When the Conservatives crow about the vast increases of employment they claim to have been responsible for in Canada, the PBO pointed out that at least 25% of all new jobs in Canada since the recession had gone to temporary foreign workers. That is a very large number of jobs that might otherwise have gone to Canadians.

If we stop for a moment and look very specifically at my community on lower Vancouver Island, I will restate some facts: youth unemployment is in double digit; first nations unemployment is in double digit; and unemployment for new Canadians is also in double digit.

● (1305)

However, we have found more than 26 employers employing hundreds of temporary foreign workers in entry-level occupations.

Now, there may be some high-skilled temporary foreign workers working in my riding. That is absolutely possible. However, these 26 employers are McDonald's, Tim Hortons franchises, and pizza franchises. These are 26 employers employing hundreds of workers.

I also want to make it clear that I have no problem with the workers who come to Canada as temporary foreign workers. In my community, they are almost all from the Philippines. They came to Canada to seek a better life. They were often falsely promised that becoming a temporary foreign worker in Canada would provide a path to permanent residency here, so they came to Canada in good faith, expecting to be able to make a life here and expecting to be able to eventually bring their families to Canada. They were just trying to do what is best for them.

Many of those on the Lower Island actually came to Canada after being employed in the Middle East, where they had no possibility of getting any permanent residency status. They actually left jobs with higher wages and better working conditions in Kuwait and other countries in the Middle East to take jobs on the Lower Island.

I know that some of the confusion has been caused by our live-in caregiver program, which again on Lower Vancouver Island is almost entirely staffed by people from the Philippines. The difference between the temporary foreign worker program and the live-in caregiver program is that the live-in caregiver program does provide that path to permanent residency in Canada, so after completing four years of work, it is possible to become a permanent resident, to reunify the family in Canada, and to help become a part of that future that we will all share together.

However, temporary foreign workers have been falsely promised that the same path is open to them, and many of them are in a quite difficult situation now, having borrowed money to come to Canada to take up these low-paying jobs.

What we have is a case of denying opportunities to Canadians while at the same time creating ideal conditions for exploiting temporary foreign workers.

I would argue that those in entry-level jobs are, by the nature of the program, very vulnerable to exploitation. Often they are ill-informed as to labour standards in Canada, having come from other countries. As a result, they are not really sure if they are eligible for overtime. They are not really sure when the employer says, "Oh, to keep this job you have to rent an apartment from me." They are not really sure how this all works in Canada. They are often pressured into what I would call side agreements, under which they pay inordinate amounts for housing or for transportation to the job, as well as paying all kinds of other fees to their employers.

As I mentioned earlier, quite often in my community I have talked to temporary foreign workers who have paid fees exceeding \$4,000 each to get the job in Canada. We all know that is illegal. The minister says if we know of cases of abuses, we should individually, as MPs, report them.

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My problem with that idea is that this abuse has been well reported in the media. It is well known that this practice is going on and it is well known who is profiting from the fees charged to temporary foreign workers.

Labour market recruiters charge not only temporary foreign workers to get the jobs but also the employers. We have people on the Lower Island who are making out like bandits on both ends of the temporary foreign worker program at the expense of those workers who are just trying to provide for their families.

There is a danger of creating a rift in my community, but so far, thankfully, through the efforts of groups like the Bayanihan Community Centre, we have managed to avoid pitting the Canadian entry-level workers, the new Canadians who are already in Canada, against the temporary foreign workers. The community centre has worked very hard to try to ensure that we keep the focus where it belongs, which is on the wrong-headed nature of the temporary foreign workers program.

I myself have actually seen an email from an employer to a temporary foreign worker saying, "You are not allowed to go to the Bayanihan Community Centre. If you do so, you will be sent back to the Philippines." They are in such a vulnerable situation that they cannot even go to the community centre that is offering some community support to those temporary foreign workers.

As I said, government members seem surprised by the abuse that is taking place, and I find that very hard to believe. We can run through, as my colleague before me did, dates stretching back to the fall of 2009, when the Auditor General first reported abuses in the program, or 2011, when the government first created blacklists, or budget 2012, when it said it would align temporary foreign workers better with the labour market, or November of 2012, when it said it would review the program, or April of 2013, when it promised to review it again.

• (1310)

Now, in April 2014, we have this very narrow moratorium on the food services industry. What we are asking for, what we want, is a broader moratorium and an audit of the program. We want an outcome that would see both new Canadians and young Canadians getting the first chance at entry-level jobs and an end to the exploitation of temporary foreign workers.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the intent of the motion from the NDP and I agree to a certain extent. However, I am concerned with that part of the motion that calls for a full-fledged moratorium on the stream of lower-skilled occupations, which include fast food service and restaurant jobs. I am wondering if anyone could explain to me if seasonal farm workers also fall into that category.

I just got off the phone with a farmer in Prince Edward Island. He has three temporary foreign workers and four locals. These farms are not all big operations, but those workers maintain that operation and the economy. Today, for whatever reason, it being a damp day, some of the locals did not show up. I will quote what this farmer said. He said, "I don't know what we'd do if we didn't have these three foreign workers that fall under the seasonal agricultural worker program".

Could the member give me the assurance that this motion would not place seasonal farm workers into that moratorium?

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Malpeque for his question, but he has answered his own question by naming the program at the end. It is separate and it is a different line. The moratorium we are calling for would have no impact on the agricultural workers.

However, I want to add to that the interesting thing that we heard from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and yesterday from the Minister of Employment himself. Both of them are calling for higher wages and better working conditions. It is a bit ironic to see the Minister of Employment and the parliamentary secretary for labour calling for higher wages and better working conditions. That is not something we usually hear coming from that side of the House, but that is obviously the ultimate fix to these shortages.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his very thoughtful speech and his very balanced way of looking at the issue of temporary foreign workers. As he articulates, the idea here is not to blame the temporary foreign workers, who come here in good faith and often suffer abuse at the hands of employers and at the hands of some not-so-nice consultants along the way as well.

Over and over again the government keeps wanting to blame just the employer, but I am reminded over and over again that the LMOs are given by the government. The reciprocal of the program is administered by the government. The 62% the minister talked about that do not require LMOs are administered by the government.

Do you believe that the audit is one way to start fixing this broken program totally?

• (1315)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Before I go to the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, I want to remind this member and all hon. members, as I have multiple times recently, to address their comments and questions to the Chair and not directly to their colleagues.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Mr. Speaker, I guess I am in the lucky position today, as members seem to ask questions to me that they have already answered themselves in the question.

Obviously it is the member for Newton—North Delta's motion today, and it is very true that we need an audit so that the evidence can be placed before the government. It apparently is not willing to read what is out there for the common person to see in the media, which is that we know there are abuses to this program.

Therefore, let us have a formal audit. Let us place that information before the House of Commons and then let us act to build a stronger Canada for those who want to come and build a future here with their families.

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be able to participate in this important debate today on the topic of the temporary foreign worker program.

*Business of Supply*

At the outset, I would like to indicate that I will be splitting my time with the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

I want to be clear about where we stand. Canadians must always be given the first crack at available jobs.

The temporary foreign worker program is largely employer-driven. It is meant as a short-term solution for Canadian employers, who should only use it as a last resort when it is absolutely impossible to fill positions with Canadian workers. That is a critical point.

The program is not designed to take jobs away from Canadians and it must never take jobs away from Canadians. As a government, we are obliged to ensure the program is not abused in this way. That is an obligation that we welcome. That is why the Minister of Employment and Social Development felt the need last week to take action to put in place a moratorium on the access of the food services sector to the temporary foreign worker program pending the government's ongoing policy review of this program.

The minister's actions came in the wake of serious allegations of abuse in this particular sector. We underline this government's commitment to combat such abuse and to ensure that employers always make efforts to hire Canadians first before making use of the temporary foreign worker program. That is why the food services sector is now facing a moratorium on the temporary foreign workers program. It is a temporary moratorium that will last until our government finishes its ongoing review.

When our government hears allegations of misuse, allegations about the labour market being distorted, or allegations about Canadians being displaced, we take action, unlike the NDP, which keeps asking for more temporary foreign workers for businesses in their ridings while at the same time calling for the program to be shut down.

It is simply stunning to listen to the New Democrats bring forward this kind of motion, because it does not seem to fit with their continuous calls for more temporary foreign workers in their ridings. We have had calls from the NDP deputy leader and MP for Vancouver East and the NDP MPs for Halifax, Ottawa Centre, Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Skeena—Bulkley Valley—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The member for Malpeque is rising on a point of order.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, this is a backbench member. How could a backbench member have access to confidential information that should be privileged only to the minister's office on who asked for temporary foreign workers? It is malarkey that this can happen. A backbench member who does not have access to the files is releasing what should be confidential and privileged information between members of Parliament who do their job in asking for something in their riding, and the minister's department is supposed to handle it.

There is something wrong here.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The Chair thanks the member for Malpeque for raising this point. The Chair will look into this and will return to the House with a ruling on that point if necessary.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Wild Rose.

• (1320)

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Mr. Speaker, I would just respond that I did hear some of these particular lists from that end of the chamber in debate today, so it seems to be a matter of public record somehow. Anyway, I do note that there have been several requests, and of course the Liberal members are certainly among the many who did not want to be outdone by the New Democrats in trying to find ways to push and pull or to suck and blow at the same time. Far be it for the Liberal Party to be outdone in that regard.

To underscore the point I was making, it is disingenuous and certainly stunning, in my opinion, to hear a party bring forward a motion like this. Those members talk about trying to shut down a program that they are continuously asking for greater use of, so that is an important point to make.

Moving on, in recent years our government has made a number of reforms to this program, and they are made with the view of ensuring that Canadian workers always get the first crack at available jobs. They are made also to protect foreign workers from exploitation and abuse.

For example, in economic action plan 2012, our government announced the intention to better ensure that businesses look at the domestic labour force before accessing the temporary foreign worker program.

In economic action plan 2013, the government announced further changes to strengthen and improve the program once again by, among other things, ensuring that temporary foreign workers are relied upon only when Canadians genuinely cannot fill the jobs, and by requiring that employers increase their recruitment efforts to hire Canadians before they will be eligible to apply for temporary foreign workers.

Then at the end of last year, improvements to the temporary foreign worker program took effect that strengthened our government's ability to assess and monitor employers to ensure they are using the program as it was intended to be used, and those improvements also increased protection for foreign workers. These included measures like the imposition of conditions on employers who hire temporary foreign workers, to demonstrate that they are paying them proper wages and providing safe and healthy working conditions consistent with Canadian standards; the authority for government officials to conduct on-site inspections to ensure that employers are meeting the conditions of the program; legislative authority to impose significant penalties on employers who break the rules, including serious criminal sanctions, even jail time, for those caught lying on their applications about their efforts to hire Canadians first; the ability to revoke the LMOs of businesses not complying with the rules of the program; and the ability to ban non-compliant employers from the program for two years and to add their names to a blacklist that is available publicly, where they are named and shamed for their misuse of the program. All these initiatives help to ensure that the temporary foreign worker program does not undercut the recruitment of unemployed skilled Canadians and permanent residents into the workforce.

*Business of Supply*

Of course, our government has also made efforts to improve the efficiency of the program and to ensure that it is responsive to labour market demands. In fact, a comprehensive review of the entire temporary foreign worker program has been under way for some time, and its findings will be critical to making improvements to the program. These improvements will better support the country's economy and enhance service to Canadian employers in need of workers.

I can assure all hon. members of this House that the government is very eager to ensure that a temporary foreign worker program serves Canadians well, that it complements the domestic job market, that it is not misused to deny jobs to qualified Canadians, and that any potential changes to the program help it best meet labour market demands. I cannot stress enough that the government is focused on ensuring that Canadians are getting the first crack at any available jobs and that employers are given the tools they need to match Canadian workers with the labour market needs in their respective industries.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that the none of the facts in my colleague's speech have been verified nor are they true. My colleague said that the NDP wants to shut down the program, which is absolutely not true. The motion, as drafted, only talks about a moratorium. If my colleague needs a dictionary, I would be happy to give him one so he could at least look up the definition of "moratorium".

The C.D. Howe Institute, a non-partisan institution, said that changes to the program between 2002 and 2013, which made it easier to hire temporary foreign workers, accelerated the rise in unemployment in Alberta and British Columbia during that same period. The report also adds—and it is important to point this out—that the rules were relaxed even though there was little empirical evidence of skills shortages.

How does my colleague explain that?

[*English*]

**Mr. Blake Richards:** The first comment I would make, Mr. Speaker, is that since the member across the way talks about using a dictionary, I suggest she use a dictionary and look up the word "context". Context is an important word for her to understand when I talk about the NDP's position on this issue. Trying to argue polar opposite ends of the spectrum is a very difficult position.

The context I talk about is important. Sure, the NDP has a motion today to put a moratorium on the program, but having listened to the comments it made publicly in the past and in the House, I find there is no question that while, on one hand, it asks for more temporary foreign workers, it really wants to shut down the program down as well. The context is very important, and I ask that she use a dictionary and look up that word.

I have made it very clear that the most important aspect is that Canadians must always—and I have to make sure they are sure of this—always be given first crack at available jobs and that this government takes very seriously any misuse or abuse by employers of this program. If there is any misuse or abuse, there are significant

consequences that would be applied in any case. Canadians are always to be given first crack.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the word "context" to which the member made reference. Let us put it into proper context in that, prior to the government's management of the temporary foreign worker program, there was no problem. This is a problem that was created in the last four or five years due to the government not doing its job in terms of oversight and establishing proper checks to make sure Canadians are, in fact, being afforded the opportunities for employment.

My question to the member is specifically this. The government talks tough when this issue surfaces, but in reality, its actions fall quite short. I am wondering if the member can indicate to the House when he believes the government was first aware that there were issues with the way in which the government was allowing the number of LMOs being released through the program. When was he first aware that there was any problem that needed to be addressed?

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Mr. Speaker, the member talks about talking tough. When we talk about the significant consequences, I find it a stretch to say that we are simply talking tough. We are talking about employers lying on their applications about their efforts to hire Canadians first and facing serious criminal sanctions, including the possibility of jail time. When we talk about LMOs being removed and employers being banned from using the program, being named and shamed on a very public blacklist, that does not sound like talking tough to me. That sounds like taking action, and that is what our government is doing.

None of those things existed when the Liberal government was in power. They all exist now. We as a government take very seriously any misuse or abuse of this program, and Canadians must always be given first crack at any available jobs.

• (1330)

**Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first I would like to express my thanks to the member for Wild Rose for sharing his time with me.

I am certainly pleased to stand in the House of Commons today to address the motion raised by the hon. member for Newton—North Delta regarding the temporary foreign worker program.

Our government's utmost priority is to ensure that Canadians always get first crack at available Canadian jobs. We are the first government to acknowledge that changes to the temporary foreign worker program are necessary, and that is precisely why our government has taken strong action to ensure that Canadians are first in line for available jobs and that employers do not abuse the program in any way, shape, or form.

First of all, I think it is important to note that this program is not new. Canada has had a temporary foreign worker program for more than 40 years; since 1973, in fact. This type of program also exists in virtually every other country around the world, and I will also add that it was the previous Liberal government that opened up the low-skill stream in 2002.



*Business of Supply*

The program should only and always be used as a last and limited resort. That said, we became aware of a number of allegations of abuse in recent weeks in the food services sector, and we have been telling employers, loud and clear, that such abuse will not be tolerated.

The temporary foreign worker program does not exist to take away jobs from Canadians, nor does it exist to facilitate the exploitation of foreign workers. As announced in economic action plans 2013 and 2014, our government is taking action to reform the program to ensure that the program is not abused in those ways and that Canadians are given the first chance at available jobs.

The results of these changes will strengthen and improve the program to support our economic recovery and growth, and ensure that more employers hire Canadians before hiring temporary foreign workers. Specifically, our government has already taken action to impose conditions on employers who hire temporary foreign workers to demonstrate that they are meeting the conditions of hiring them. These include paying them proper wages and providing safe and healthy working conditions consistent with Canadian standards.

Of course, robust monitoring and compliance measures are important tools for ensuring employers are living up to their commitments with respect to wages, working conditions, and investments in training for Canadians. That is why we have also taken action to allow officials from the departments of citizenship and immigration and employment and social development to conduct inspections of employers who hire temporary foreign workers to ensure that they are meeting the conditions of employment.

In addition, CIC can now revoke or suspend processing of work permits and ESDC can revoke, suspend, or refuse to process labour market opinions, or LMOs, which assess the impact that hiring temporary foreign workers would have on our domestic market. A positive LMO means there is a need for a foreign worker to fill a job and that no Canadian worker is available. Meanwhile, employers who fail to provide documentation as requested or who do not cooperate with an inspection can be barred from hiring temporary foreign workers for up to two years.

With these reforms, officers will also be able to inspect an employer at any time during the employment of a temporary foreign worker and for up to six years after the start date of that worker's work permit. In addition, we now require employers to pay temporary foreign workers at the prevailing wage.

We have added questions to employer LMO applications to ensure that the temporary foreign worker program is not used to facilitate the outsourcing of Canadian jobs.

• (1335)

We have also introduced fees for employers for the processing of LMOs and increased the fees for work permits so that the taxpayers are no longer subsidizing the cost. These fees have been vigorously opposed by both opposition parties. However, time and time again, we repeated that taxpayers should not be on the hook for processing applications for temporary foreign workers. Their employers should be.

We have also put in place new rules to ensure that employers who rely on temporary foreign workers have a firm plan in place to transition to a Canadian workforce over time through the LMO process. More recently, in economic action plan 2014, our Conservative government also committed to introducing reforms to the temporary foreign worker program for workers who are exempt from the LMO process to ensure that the program continues to promote Canada's economic and labour market interests.

If the opposition was serious about reforming this program, it would have voted for all of the reforms that we have already brought in. Instead, what we see is our friends in the NDP and the Liberal Party continuing to ask for more TFWs for their own ridings. Several members during debate today in the House said that they have asked the minister to support applications for TFWs. We know many others who have also done so on a regular basis.

Despite the opposition asking for more TFWs, it has become obvious in recent weeks that even stronger action needs to be taken. Therefore, following the serious allegations of abuse, the minister announced last week that his department will no longer process any new or pending LMO applications related to the food services sector. In addition, any unfilled positions tied to a previously approved LMO will be suspended. This moratorium will remain in effect until the completion of the ongoing review of the temporary foreign worker program.

Our Conservative government will not tolerate abuse of this program. Allegations of abuse or misuse will continue to be investigated, and any employer found to have violated the rules will face very serious consequences. Those employers who are found to have lied about their efforts to hire Canadians could face potential criminal prosecution, with sanctions that include fines and jail time.

We want to make sure that this program best serves Canada's economy; that it serves to complement, not undercut, the recruitment of unemployed Canadians and permanent residents into the workforce; that it effectively provides service to Canadian employers facing short-term skills gaps; and that it is responsive to labour market demands. That is why we will continue to pursue significant reforms to the temporary foreign program to ensure that employers are genuine in their efforts to recruit and train Canadians, and that it is only used as a last and limited resort when Canadians are not available.

We are responding. We are acting. We are improving this program to make it work for employers, for employees, and for all Canadians.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if I did not know any better, I would say that the speech was written and produced by the Prime Minister's Office and, I must say, somewhat delivered by the member. He seems to have to say all of the right words in order to impress his leader, quite frankly.

*Business of Supply*

When the member talked about the issue, he needs to recognize that he said “we are going to fix this issue” and “we are going to fix this problem”. The Conservatives like to pass on blame. What they need to do is take a look in a mirror and realize that the problem exists today because of the Conservative government. Prior to the government taking office, there was no problem. It is completely and 100% the responsibility of the Conservative government. The Prime Minister's Office has misinformed the member and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who is heckling from his seat.

When was this particular minister first aware of the problem? We know that it has been there for years. They are only recently talking about taking these tough actions after it surfaced on numerous occasions. When did the minister first learn about the issues surrounding the temporary foreign worker program?

•(1340)

**Mr. Brad Butt:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the compliment from the member for Winnipeg North, but I am not the minister. I think if he has a direct question for the minister, he should ask the minister.

I can certainly say that I have had some experience with the TFW program as a member of Parliament. I can say that, generally speaking, it is a very successful program. It works for the workers and it works for the employers.

I am going to say that if an employer deliberately misleads, if an employer deliberately shows up and fills out forms incorrectly to get an LMO issued in their favour when they have not done the right work to make sure they are recruiting Canadians first, that is not just the program's fault, that is the applicant's fault. The applicant is misleading the Government of Canada. We are going to make sure that we toughen the system up to make sure those potential loopholes that have been identified are completely shut down, and that LMOs are only issued to bona fide companies that need them because they absolutely were not able to find Canadians to do the work.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member opposite.

A C.D. Howe study was done that took a look at the fact that there was really little evidence of shortages in many of the low-skilled occupations that were being fast-tracked, and that the flood of foreign workers in two provinces added a cumulative 3.9 percentage points to the unemployment rates in the west.

Now the NDP has called for an urgent audit of the program by the Auditor General. Part of the role that the Auditor General plays is taking a look at a department's programs, and the checks and balances in place to see if they are being effective in how the program is being managed.

I have to ask the member why it is that the Conservatives are objecting to having the Auditor General review this program to see if the department has in place the appropriate checks and balances?

**Mr. Brad Butt:** Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, the Auditor General is an independent officer of Parliament. The Auditor General can investigate, launch investigations, and do work on any department or agency of the government he wishes to do. If that is something he wishes to do, that is fine.

Here is the difference. The government has to take responsibility and it has to do things that need to be done. What this minister is doing is taking responsibility, working in his department, and working with the officials to improve a program that is vital to Canada's economy. I know the opposition wants to throw the TFW program in the trash can. We want to improve it and make it better, and make sure that Canadians who can do the jobs and who are available to do the jobs get first crack at the jobs.

Canada is a country that needs a temporary foreign worker program. We just need a better, stronger program.

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I am honoured to rise today in the House to speak to the motion on behalf of my constituents in Surrey North. I do not know where to start. What a mess the Conservatives have created. They have badly bungled this program. I have no other way to describe it.

There appears to be a trend in the government's response to a number of programs. Mention is being made in all of the papers across the country about Canadian workers being replaced by foreign workers. There is also the issue of abuse in the Senate by both Conservative and Liberal senators with regard to expenses. There is the issue of the government's inability to catch tax cheats. The current immigration program is being abused. Government programs in different departments are being abused and there seems to be a trend.

The government appears to be getting old and growing tired. It has failed to provide leadership to Canadians in order to provide them with the services they need. It has failed to manage programs in the way Canadians expect them to be managed in this country.

The Conservative government is once again failing Canadians in order to benefit their rich corporate friends. How is it that in a time of high employment, rather than striving to match hard-working Canadians with available jobs they are being replaced with temporary foreign workers? This is unprecedented. It is happening under the Conservative government.

*Business of Supply*

I have heard members of the Conservative government talk about the reforms they are bringing in and how they are investing money in their economic action plan. We have seen this picture many times before. This problem did not just happen yesterday. This has been an ongoing problem. The government has known about abuse in the temporary foreign worker program for years. In the fall of 2009 the Auditor General reported that the practices of HRDC “do not ensure the quality and consistency of decisions when issuing labour market opinions”. The government has known that this program has not been working since 2009, and perhaps prior to that. We have not had any answers from the minister in the House with regard to when he first knew about the problem. We know from the Auditor General that this abuse has been going on for the last nine years and yet the Conservatives get up in the House time and time again and say they are going to fix the problem. The Conservatives have failed to fix this problem for the last five years. It is unbelievable.

In 2011 the Conservatives stood up in the House and said they were going to create a blacklist that would name employers who have broken the rules of the temporary foreign worker program. We have not seen any blacklist and no companies have been charged. Yet in the House today members of the Conservative Party get up and use the talking points from the Prime Minister's Office to say that they are going to fix this problem, that they are matching Canadians with jobs. We know that is not happening and Canadians know that is not happening. It is time for the Conservative government to fix this for good.

Let me give the House another example.

In November 2012 over 200 low-skilled temporary foreign workers replaced workers at a mining company in British Columbia, my beautiful province. Many workers in my constituency were more than willing to go up north and work in the mines but the Conservatives chose to bring in those temporary foreign workers instead of employing Canadians.

● (1345)

Again, in April 2013, there was another example, so this problem was not created today. This has been going on for a number of years, and the government has been notified. We have brought this issue up in the House many times, and the Conservatives have promised to fix it. It has not been fixed.

In April 2013, RBC brought in foreign workers to replace Canadians. The government has known about this. This was about a year ago, and Conservatives still have not worked on this matter.

I could provide other examples of where the government has failed to act on temporary foreign workers. Under the Conservative government, the temporary foreign worker program has grown exponentially. There are over 350,000 temporary foreign workers in Canada at this point. When we look at the queue to get into this country on a permanent basis for family reunifications, it takes eight years. Yet we are importing over 350,000 temporary foreign workers to this country.

The Conservatives make up stats to justify programs that are seriously broken.

We often hear Conservatives talk about market forces and how they drive our economy. If we look at the gas price today, it is \$1.52

a litre in my constituency. I have had a number of constituents talk to me about high gas prices in this country. It adds to the cost of living for Canadians. Yet the Conservatives will tell us that the market drives the prices, and there is nothing they can do. We have proposed many solutions. We have asked the government to appoint an ombudsman to look at these unfair gas prices.

We have heard in the House over and over about high cellphone prices. We know the roaming charges we pay in this country. The government says that market forces drive competition, and it does not have any control over it.

When it comes to wages, what do the Conservatives do? They use their power to drive down wages. How? It is with temporary foreign workers. Why do we not let the free market economy determine wages? No. It is a way to help the Conservatives' corporate friends. They will bring in temporary foreign workers to drive Canadian wages down. I do not know how the Conservatives can justify that to Canadians.

They talk about the free market. Why do we not let the free market determine the wages of people who are going to be employed, especially Canadians? Yet the Conservatives interfere in low-paying jobs and low-skill jobs. They bring in foreign workers to drive down wages. That is not fair. When it comes to wages, the Conservatives do not believe in the invisible hand in the economy.

It is clear that the Conservatives have created a double standard to please their big corporate friends. The government is assisting these companies to work around the marketplace to the disadvantage of Canadian workers for the sake of the bottom line and on the backs of Canadian families.

The Conservatives will stand and talk about how they are going to fix this. The fact is, the problems have been ongoing in this program for the last four or five years. The Minister of Employment and Social Development is promising the House and Canadians that he will fix the problem. Unfortunately, Conservatives have failed Canadians. They have not worked hard enough to ensure that Canadian workers, not temporary foreign workers, are employed in good-paying jobs.

● (1350)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to talk about the importance of the Office of the Auditor General, which has done immense work in all sorts of areas. Canadians have a great deal of confidence in the auditor's office.

Yesterday the deputy leader of the Liberal Party emphasized how important it was for Canada's Auditor General to investigate the temporary foreign worker program. There is a need to restore public confidence in the temporary foreign worker program.

I am wondering if the member could emphasize the importance of the program and the way it was originally designed, back when we had Prime Minister Trudeau, in the seventies. He said that this program could be of great value to Canada. Over the years, it has demonstrated that. It is only in recent years, when it has been abused, that it has really caused problems. The benefits of having the Auditor General look into it with the idea of—

*Statements by Members*

•(1355)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Surrey North.

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu:** Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the Auditor General and his office and the service he provides to Canadians. We have been asking the government to ask the Auditor General to conduct an independent review of the program, because the Conservatives have failed to deliver a good working program.

As the member has pointed out, the temporary foreign worker program can be a good tool for our country. Yet under the Conservative government, we have seen abuses year after year. This is not a problem that just popped up today. The government has known about it and it has failed to act. It is time the government acted on it and made sure that Canadians are employed before temporary foreign workers.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I think the foreign worker program raises profound issues for Canadians. It is not just the abuse of the program, as in the recent uncovering of employers who brought foreign workers here and displaced Canadian workers. When we look at an incident like the XL beef plant, where E. coli got into steaks, we realize that the workers there were forced to deal with many more carcasses per hour than they could possibly deal with while cleaning each knife in between. Those workers, from Somalia, all happened to be on the temporary foreign worker program. They lacked the ability, the union mentioned at the time, to complain, to go back to the employer, because if they complained, their relationship was only to one employer. They could have immediately been sent back to Somalia.

There are fundamental moral questions about the temporary foreign worker program, and I think Canadians need to look to those as well. We need to ensure that capital, our respect for natural resources, and our use of human beings is never stateless, without place and without respect for Canada as the country it should be.

I ask my friend if he does not agree that we need to look at some fundamentals with respect to how we treat human labour, whether from Canada or from overseas.

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely right. We need to ensure, once those temporary foreign workers are here, that they are not abused by the employers and are not subjected to wages that are lower than the minimum wages we have in Canada. As the NDP pointed out, employers were happy paying 15% less to the temporary foreign workers.

We need to ensure that this program is not only functional but is credible and clean. We need to ensure that we provide protection for those workers to ensure that they are able to get the same protections Canadian workers would get.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech and I found the points he raised very relevant. He gave a number of examples of how we have been speaking out about cases of abuse and misuse of the program for years. We have called on the government to review this program on a number of occasions.

As we know, the government does not want to listen to anyone when it comes to the immigrant worker program or electoral reform. Unfortunately, they do not walk the talk.

My question for my colleague is the following: If the government listened to experts and parliamentarians, would we be in the situation being described in the House today?

[*English*]

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu:** Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out at the outset of my speech, what a mess. This is a mess created by the current government. It did not happen overnight. It has been ongoing since 2009. We know that the Auditor General pointed this out.

Every time this comes up in the news, whether last year or the year before, the Minister of Employment and Social Development gets up in the House to say that the government is working on it and will fix it. Unfortunately, the government has not delivered.

The temporary foreign worker program is being abused. I ask all members of the House to support our motion so that we can clean up this mess. The Conservatives have failed to do that.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

•(1400)

[*English*]

### TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, Cons. Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, despite the fact the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that tolerance of divergent beliefs is a hallmark of democratic society, the Law Society of Upper Canada and the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society have voted to ban future graduates from Trinity Western University's School of Law from practising.

Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms constitutionally guarantees freedom of religion and freedom from discrimination. As such, I stand in this House urging both of these societies to change course and respect the enshrined rights of Trinity Western University graduates. To be clear, while these discriminatory positions taken by these oversight bodies will never survive a court challenge, it is truly sad that such an action should ever have to be undertaken against the very bodies that shoulder the responsibility of protecting these very rights.

In standing for the rights of future Trinity Western University graduates to practise law wherever they choose in Canada, I am standing up for the constitutionally enshrined rights of every single Canadian citizen. I trust this position enjoys the support of every member in this place.

#### FOUR WINDS MINISTRY

**Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment today to recognize the Four Winds housing project in my riding of Provencher. Four Winds, with the support of the Southland Church in Steinbach, is a support and housing program with self-initiated mentorship programs for individuals dealing with life-controlling behaviours and broken relationships.

The Four Winds Ministry is a one-year-long volunteer-driven program that helps people with a variety of issues like addictions, depression, fear, anxiety, and anger. While Four Winds helps residents with their basic needs, it also provides individuals with a healthy community where they can flourish and grow. Their long-term goal is to have people find spiritual and emotional wholeness and encourage personal growth with God and others. Four Winds runs a variety of life skill workshops throughout the year. This includes workshops on boundaries, communication, conflict resolution, cooking, raising godly kids, finding and keeping a job, and a fresh-start financial course.

I would like to congratulate Stefan Duerksen and his team at Four Winds for all the great work they do for our community in Provencher.

\* \* \*

#### DAN HEAP

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the first time I voted for a winning candidate, it was for Dan Heap. I was thrilled because Dan Heap, who died last week at the age of 88, was the real deal.

Priest, politician, pacifist, socialist, a factory worker, and a father, his life was not about a career; it was about a calling. He believed in the social gospel of the common good. He fought for the rights of the little guy, those on the margins: low-wage workers, immigrants, the homeless, refugees. As a priest, Dan did not settle for the comfortable parish assignment, spending 18 years working on the factory floor. As a member of Parliament, he did not settle for the sound bite, challenging the Trudeau government of the day's decision to test cruise missiles in Canada.

Dan Heap walked the walk and countless activists followed. From John Sewell to Jack Layton, from Olivia Chow to many of my colleagues in this place, he will continue to inspire generations of Canadians to stand up for social justice, fight for equality, and work every day for peace around the world.

\* \* \*

#### NATUROPATHIC AND ACUPUNCTURE SERVICES

**Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I thank the Canadian Association of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine as well as the Federation of Ontario Traditional Chinese Medicine Associations for welcoming me at their annual gala.

[Translation]

Acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine complement western medicine very effectively. After I was diagnosed with multiple melanoma last November, a good friend of mine, Mado Gravelle, recommended that I consult an acupuncturist, Dr.

#### Statements by Members

Alexander Tran. My friend attributed her recovery from cancer dating back to 1988 to Dr. Tran's professional care. Since my first visit to him, all of his very hopeful projections have come true.

[English]

For this reason, I am happy that the government has removed its portion of harmonized sales tax on naturopathic and acupuncture services as part of its 2014 economic action plan.

• (1405)

[Translation]

These proven treatment methods must be recognized.

[English]

I am now calling on provincial governments to improve the way they regulate this profession.

\* \* \*

#### WORLD IMMUNIZATION WEEK

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is World Immunization Week. The theme is "Are you up to date?" and many Canadians are not.

Developing countries have made progress in expanding vaccination programs. Some will soon eradicate fatal childhood diseases. Vaccinations prevent three million deaths a year. Yet in 2012, over seven million children under five years of age died from diphtheria, measles, pertussis, pneumonia, polio, diarrhea, rubella, and tetanus; all preventable with vaccination.

Twenty per cent of children globally have not had basic vaccinations. In Canada, we once had a 95% rate. That today has dropped to 60% in some areas. Diseases we thought were eradicated in Canada for years are now recurring diseases that maim permanently or kill. Canada faces its worst measles outbreak in two decades, and this can be lethal.

We must renew the national immunization strategy, an idea I took to the health committee but it is not on the agenda. Let us protect our children and prevent the spread of these diseases to others. Vaccinate our kids.

\* \* \*

#### M. SULLIVAN & SON

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, *A Hundred Years on a Handshake* is the name of a recently published book on prominent Ottawa family business M. Sullivan & Son, Arnprior, Ontario.

*Statements by Members*

This year marks 100 years in business for the oldest family-owned, privately run construction company in Canada. Based in eastern Ontario, the company went from \$5,012 in revenues in its first year, to more than \$100 million in annual sales today. M. Sullivan & Son is recognized as one of Canada's 50 best-managed companies. The secret of its success? Loyalty; loyalty to its customers and to its employees. M. Sullivan & Son can boast of an employee still with the company after 72 years of service. Not many other companies can say the same thing.

It was my privilege to know Tommy Sullivan, company founder Maurice's grandson. Tommy was always a good supporter. He built up M. Sullivan & Son in the modern age. He was an Armprior booster.

Please join me in congratulating M. Sullivan & Son as it celebrates 100 years in business.

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**ORGAN AND BLOOD DONATION**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honour of the late Rocky Campana and the iCANdonate campaign.

Born in Windsor, Ontario, Rocky was a determined social justice advocate whose work with the LGBT community included initiating a program to raise funds for the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation, as well as volunteering for the Pride Library and Alzheimer's Society.

At the time of his passing, the Campana family hoped to continue his legacy by donating his organs and tissues for transplant. Unfortunately, their wishes were denied when they disclosed that Rocky was an active gay man. The decision came despite an estimated 4,500 Canadians waiting for an organ transplant today. This prompted the family, medical organizations, and other stakeholders to start the iCANdonate campaign and begin petitioning for an end to discrimination by sexual orientation when donating blood, organs, and tissues post-mortem.

I am proud to have joined with fellow New Democrats and members of all political parties who are tabling these petitions signed by over 3,000 people from across Canada.

In the wake of National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, I hope that all members of this House will continue to work toward ending these discriminatory practices and follow the positive example that Rocky and the Campana family have set out for us.

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**BRANTFORD**

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Brantford continues to experience an economic revitalization and cultural renaissance, driven by post-secondary growth in our downtown core. In fact, Brantford is celebrated as a model community for renewal through post-secondary and higher education. What is more, projects continue to emerge and move forward, thanks to the philanthropy of individuals and model corporate citizens determined to give back.

Brantford is excited about the plans for a new YMCA Laurier athletics and recreation complex to facilitate further growth and new

opportunities for families in our downtown. The partnership of the Y and Laurier is the first of its kind in North America, but the project would not be possible without the generous support of business leaders passionate about Brantford's future.

Two exceptional families, the Roger and Edith Davis family and the Steve and Helen Kun family, recently stepped up with generous million-dollar donations. We thank the Davis and Kun families.

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● (1410)

**RENEWABLE FUELS STRATEGY**

**Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to celebrate the successes of this Conservative government's renewable fuels strategy.

In my riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London, the Integrated Grain Processors Co-operative very recently produced its one billionth litre of ethanol. IGPC Ethanol Inc. began producing fuel ethanol in October 2008. Located in the town of Aylmer, IGPC produces 150 million litres of ethanol annually. The distiller's grains, which are a co-product of ethanol manufacturing, feed area beef, dairy, and pork operations. This bio-refinery provides a local market for grains and employs over 50 people in my riding.

Our government's approach to reducing greenhouse gases spurred the construction of plants like IGPC. Our renewable fuels strategy would reduce emissions while creating economic growth in rural areas. This is in stark contrast to the NDP and Liberal tax on everything, which would just hurt farmers and small businesses.

\* \* \*

**WELLAND CANAL FALLEN WORKERS MEMORIAL TASK FORCE**

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the National Day of Mourning for workers killed on the job. Today, I have the honour of recognizing fallen workers from my riding.

The building of the Welland Canal from 1914 to 1932 brought jobs to the region and made our communities thrive. However, this incredible achievement was built at great cost and sacrifice: 131 men and boys tragically lost their lives while working in difficult and dangerous conditions. To recognize those who lost their lives, the Welland Canal Fallen Workers Memorial Task Force was created to build a memorial to remember the sacrifice of those men and their families. I am proud to serve on the task force and look forward to seeing this important project come to fruition.

*Statements by Members*

I am pleased to announce that the memorial will be located at Lock 3, in St. Catharines. I would like to thank the St. Catharines city councillors who unanimously approved the location of the memorial and the Seaway, which actually dedicated the land.

We owe a responsibility to those who built the canal because, many decades ago, this House promised a memorial to those fallen workers. Now, we will finally complete that promise.

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**CANADIAN FILM DAY**

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is the first ever Canadian Film Day, celebrating Canadian films on all screens big and small. The timing of the inaugural Canadian Film Day is perfect, as it was announced recently that six Canadian films have been selected to compete at the prestigious 2014 Cannes Film Festival. This is an historic milestone worth celebrating.

Our government is very proud of our talented filmmakers. We invest more than \$600 million annually in the audiovisual sector through Telefilm Canada, the National Film Board, the Canada Media Fund, the Canada Council for the Arts, and tax credit programs. We support the Canadian audiovisual sector because we know how much it contributes to our communities and economies. In 2012-13, film and television production in Canada generated \$5.8 billion to the Canadian economy and approximately 130,000 jobs.

I invite my hon. colleagues to join me in saluting Canada's wonderful audiovisual talent today and every day.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**WORLD IMMUNIZATION WEEK**

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since this is World Immunization Week, I rise to underscore the importance of immunization for all Canadians.

Vaccination currently prevents an estimated 2 to 3 million deaths every year from diseases like diphtheria, whooping cough, polio, measles and tetanus. Infectious diseases know no borders, as evidenced by the recent measles outbreak in British Columbia, the largest such outbreak in Canada in the past 30 years.

The government must remain vigilant and continue to fund organizations like the GAVI Alliance, which provides more equitable access to existing vaccines for people in all communities, including the most remote communities.

\* \* \*

[English]

**HUMANITARIAN WORKERS**

**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians to express our deep sadness for the loss of the three Médecins Sans Frontières staff members killed in the attack on the health clinic in the Central African Republic. Our thoughts are with the families of all the victims of the attack.

It pains me to have to express this only eight months after the death of an MSF employee in South Sudan and just weeks after the deaths of Canadian aid workers in Afghanistan.

Canada values the work of individuals undertaking humanitarian assistance in fragile states under very challenging and insecure environments. We appreciate humanitarian workers who put themselves in harm's way every day to assist people in some of the most dangerous conditions in the world.

Canada will continue to make a difference.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

**PALLIATIVE AND COMPASSIONATE CARE**

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, end of life questions are not easy to consider, but without doubt we want happy, healthy lives, free from pain and full of dignity for ourselves and all our loved ones. I am proud now as I was in 2010 to come together with the hon. members for Windsor—Tecumseh and Kitchener—Conestoga as co-chairs of an ad hoc committee of dedicated MPs from both sides of the House to hear from Canadians across the country directly affected by end of life long-term care and mental health issues. I felt then, and do now, that men and women of all ages want to be enabled to live pain-free and with dignity, free from emotional, physical, and systemic abuse, to feel their lives are relevant and that they are not a burden on society and in particular their families and friends.

This is an important discussion to keep having and I am glad the Canadian Medical Association will cross the country this year to keep the discussion going. I encourage everyone here to continue in this discussion and to join us this evening in room 216-N after votes.

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**FAIR ELECTIONS ACT**

**Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last Friday our government announced it would support amendments to the fair elections act. The amended bill would end the use of the voter information card, which is an unreliable form of ID and a move that many of my constituents in Calgary Centre say is needed.

### Oral Questions

Also, it will not be possible for voters to show up with no ID and have someone vouch for who they are. While the amended fair elections act would end the use of vouching and all voters would have to show ID, if their ID has no address on it, which is a concern for students, they could have someone with proper ID co-sign an oath of address. However, those who give false information would face up to a \$50,000 fine, or even jail time. The law would require Elections Canada to check people who take the oath as well as their co-signers to ensure that no one votes more than once. A post-election audit would ensure that these rules are followed.

Canadians believe that these changes are common sense and reasonable, and they support them.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, May 2 is just around the corner, and that means that it is time to take stock. It will be good news for the NDP and bad news for the Conservatives.

Our MPs from the south shore are fighting so that the public does not have to foot the bill for replacing the Champlain Bridge. In the Eastern Townships, rocked by the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, NDP MPs are pushing for improved railway safety. Out east, our MPs are fighting for VIA Rail service. Thanks to our Quebec City MPs, the only bilingual maritime rescue sub-centre was kept open. MPs from the north are fighting for aboriginal treaties to be honoured and against high food costs. Thanks to the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, officers of Parliament will now have to be bilingual. Thanks to the work done by the vice-chair of our caucus, cheese producers know that they can count on the NDP.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives gutted employment insurance, the CBC and environmental protection. They are caught up in their scandals. They are refusing to work with the provinces. They are making cuts to health care and raising the retirement age. In 2011, the people made a choice, but in 2015, they will choose the NDP.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### RAIL SAFETY WEEK

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, following the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic this summer, our government took further measures to ensure the safety and security of our rail network. Our government marks this Rail Safety Week by investing \$9.2 million for improvements to over 600 grade crossings across Canada, and that includes over \$250,000 for improvements across Windsor and Essex county.

As well, our government took action last week to address the Transportation Safety Board's recent recommendations following the Lac-Mégantic incident by requiring, among other measures, that DOT-111 tank cars which fail to meet the January 2014 published standard be phased out within three years.

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs applauded the Minister of Transport for "listening to the public safety concerns of

emergency responders and for following through on her commitments".

Our government continues to show our commitment to the health and safety of Canadians by improving rail safety.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### EMPLOYMENT

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when did the Prime Minister become aware of the blatant abuses of the temporary foreign worker program?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is an odd thing for the NDP to ask. More than any other caucus, the NDP is always asking for temporary foreign workers.

For the past three years, we have been making changes to the program, and our position is very clear. We will never allow an employer to use a temporary foreign worker when a Canadian is available.

• (1420)

[English]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there have been complaints about this program for years. I first alerted the Prime Minister about it in September 2012. The Prime Minister himself admitted four months ago in a closed-door meeting in B.C. that, "We have seen very blatant examples of companies using this in ways that were not in the best interests of Canadians".

How long has the Prime Minister known about these blatant abuses?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, since 2011, the government has been making modifications to this program, by the way, against the wishes of the NDP. The NDP members have voted against these changes and continue to inundate the Minister of Employment and Social Development with requests for temporary foreign workers for their own ridings.

We have been extremely clear. It does appear to be the case that there are some Canadian employers who believe that they can have a preference for temporary foreign workers over Canadian workers. This government has been clear: that is absolutely unacceptable and it will not be tolerated.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, they say "clear" and "unacceptable", but for years, they have done nothing. Under the Conservative Party, the number of temporary foreign workers has grown by many hundreds of thousands, yet the Conservatives have done nothing. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister refuses to admit that there has been ongoing abuse of the program.



*Oral Questions*

Will the Prime Minister support the NDP motion to end these abuses and enable the Auditor General to take an objective look, get to the bottom of this whole shocking affair, and find out who is responsible for these abuses and where and how they took place?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, thanks to this government's reforms, the number of applications for temporary foreign workers dropped by 30% last year even though the NDP voted in favour of the status quo.

The NDP is refusing to do anything to reform the program, and that is unacceptable. This government, however, is taking action.

\* \* \*

[English]

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words. We will see later today during the vote which side is in favour of the status quo.

This once again is a quote from the Prime Minister, "Canadians understand that our Senate, as it stands today, must either change or, like the old Upper Houses of our provinces, vanish".

Why is it only the Prime Minister's resolve about abolishing the Senate that has vanished?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as members would know, the Supreme Court has ruled in its wisdom that the federal government can neither abolish the Senate. Nor in fact can the federal government actually propose significant reforms to the Senate. That is all now, according to the Supreme Court of Canada, within the purview of the provinces. Therefore, my position has not changed.

If the provinces believe, as I do, that there should be reform, they should bring forward those forthwith. If they do not believe that, they should bring forward amendments to abolish the Senate.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for months the Prime Minister kept saying that the leader of the third party was defending the status quo and gave us the impression that he disagreed with that.

Now, all of a sudden, the Prime Minister is waving a white flag and admitting defeat. Why? Because he would have to talk to the provinces and it is far too difficult for him to talk to them.

Is the Prime Minister now the new champion of the status quo in the Senate?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary. According to the Supreme Court, only the provinces can reform or abolish the Senate. I encourage the provinces to do that. They have the power to make amendments through their legislators. Nonetheless, it is clear that Canadians do not want constitutional negotiations.

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has allowed the temporary foreign worker program to become a force that drives down wages across the country and takes advantage of vulnerable people from abroad. It has doubled the intake of temporary foreign workers since taking office.

Will the Prime Minister now commit to significant reductions in the size of this broken program?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing, and we are doing it with the opposition of the Liberal Party. Under reforms brought in by this government over the past three years, applications for low-skilled temporary foreign workers have dropped this year by 30%, in spite of the fact that the Liberal Party voted against them.

Liberal MPs continue to write to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, demanding more temporary foreign workers for their ridings. It is absolutely clear that the government's position is that temporary foreign workers can be used when they are needed, but only when they are needed. They can never be used in place of available and willing Canadian workers.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, the jobs minister said that abuses were rare in the temporary foreign worker program. The very next day, the program was so broken that the government had to impose a moratorium on an entire sector.

I raised concerns about this program with him a year ago. Will the Prime Minister have us believe that the government just learned about these program problems last Thursday?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are getting a revisionist history from the Liberal Party, which not only started this program and expanded this program, and continues to demand temporary foreign workers for its own ridings, but has consistently voted against any restriction on the use of temporary foreign workers.

Our position is very different. We will not tolerate any situation where an employer thinks he can use temporary foreign workers when Canadians are available.

[Translation]

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the youth unemployment rate is twice as high as that of other Canadians. The government is driving wages down with the hiring of temporary foreign workers. Canadian students are looking for summer jobs as we speak.

Will the Prime Minister fix his broken program and allow students to get a job with a decent wage this summer?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, the Liberal Party opposes any changes to this program. The reality is that the number of applications for temporary foreign workers has dropped this year by 30% thanks to the changes made by this government. Our position is clear.

[English]

Because we stand up for Canadian workers, it is one of the reasons why, and I just cannot help mentioning this, we saw in the report last week that the Canadian middle class was doing better than the middle classes of just about any country.

\* \* \*

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, why is the Prime Minister refusing to give the commissioner of elections the power to compel witnesses to testify to investigators? The Competition Bureau has this power. The elections watchdogs in seven provinces in Australia and in the United States all have this power. What is he so afraid of?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, I am delighted to see evidence that the Canadian population, including, by the way, supporters of the New Democratic Party, strongly supports this government's electoral reform legislation, including the principle that people should not be able to vote without being able to show their identity.

Regarding the specific question, the powers given to the independent Commissioner of Official Languages are consistent with those given to all other investigators for similar offences.

• (1430)

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I believe the Prime Minister probably meant to speak of the commissioner of elections and not the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Even with the Conservative about-face, the Chief Electoral Officer still will not be able to encourage Canadians to vote. Encouraging voter turnout is the sort of thing that used to be non-partisan, something we could all agree upon was important.

Does the Prime Minister really believe that encouraging people to vote is a partisan issue?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me correct myself. I meant to say, of course, that the commissioner of elections will have powers in terms of investigations that are fully consistent with those of all other investigators on similar offences.

As we know, the biggest single reason why people fail to vote is that they are not aware of the various times of when, where, and how they can vote. That is the core responsibility of Elections Canada, and we encourage it to focus on that responsibility and actually reverse the trend we have seen in elections, to see voter turnout go up instead of down.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, actually, as we saw from the examples I provided the Prime Minister, it is simply not true to say that other investigative bodies on

elections do not have that power. In Australia, in the U.S., and in seven provinces, they do have that power.

Yesterday I made a personal appeal to the Prime Minister to work constructively on this bill. Will the Prime Minister sit down with me and the other opposition leaders to work together to write an elections bill that will truly strengthen our democracy for all Canadians?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, as we know, the New Democrats decided they were against this bill before they read it. Their own critic admitted that.

The reality is that we have seen in polling that the public strongly supports this. The public is very strongly opposed to the NDP's fundamental view that people should be able to vote even if they have no intention or ability to prove their identity. That is an extreme position, a recipe for fraud, one that Canadians do not support, and one that this government will not support.

[Translation]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, although the Conservatives have made some amendments, their election reform is full of holes. Bill C-23 still does not give investigators the powers they need to uncover fraud. Even with the Conservatives' election reform, perpetrators of the robocall scandal would remain unpunished, because Bill C-23 does not allow Elections Canada to compel testimony and to get hold of the documents it needs for its investigation, nor does the bill force call centres to retain telephone numbers and the scripts of their calls.

Will the minister stop protecting fraudsters and fix the holes in his bill?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Elections Canada investigator has the same powers as a police investigator. The hon. member's problem with the bill is that it requires people to show a piece of ID to prove who they are. The NDP thinks that people should be able to vote without any ID. That is an extreme position and one that is widely rejected by Canadians. We will require ID so that we know who is voting.

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, even with its amendments, the government still refuses to budge on giving more powers to elections investigators. The former commissioner of Canada elections, William Corbett, was very clear in committee. He said that there was nothing in Bill C-23 that will enhance the ability of the commissioner to investigate alleged cases of fraud.

Why is the minister content to have a commissioner of Canada Elections whose hands are tied behind his back? Why is he more concerned about protecting fraudsters than protecting the integrity of the election process?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I said it in French; I will say it in English. The Commissioner of Canada Elections has all the same investigative powers of a police force.

Furthermore, we are increasing his power by making him independent. He will be independent from Elections Canada and housed in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

However, the real objection of the NDP members is that they believe people should be allowed to vote without any ID whatsoever. We reject that. The fair elections act would require people to show ID demonstrating who they are, or they will not be able to vote.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT**

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal tradition of bringing in temporary foreign workers lives on under the Conservative employment minister. Under the Liberals, more than 600 exotic dancers were allowed into Canada on the pretext that there was a shortage of qualified workers. Then, the Conservatives allowed some banks and McDonald's restaurants to replace Canadian employees with temporary foreign workers. Every time a new flaw in the program comes to light, the government promises in vain to remedy the situation. When will the Conservatives admit that an independent assessment is necessary?

• (1435)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question, particularly because she reminded the House that, under the Liberals, a temporary foreign worker program existed specifically to bring in exotic dancers. The Liberals issued 600 work permits for exotic dancers.

Our government shut down that program. We protected foreign women and we are going to continue to safeguard the integrity of the immigration system. We did away with the Liberals' exotic dancer program.

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP has never lobbied for McDonald's restaurants or strip clubs.

The number of temporary foreign workers has doubled under the Conservatives. The program, which was supposed to be used as a last resort, has become a way of driving wages down.

The Conservatives have constantly made the rules more flexible by opening the program to unskilled workers and allowing employers to pay those workers less than Canadians. The C.D. Howe Institute has indicated that the program is partially responsible for the hike in the unemployment rate.

When will the government launch an independent investigation?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we reviewed this policy and have already made changes to

it, which has resulted in a drop in the number of temporary foreign worker applications.

Perhaps the NDP should investigate their own policies since there is quite a bit of hypocrisy coming from the other side of the House. It is the NDP that requested labour market opinion exemptions for musicians and opposed the position of the Canadian musicians' union. It is the NDP that wanted to speed up the elimination of the program's checks and balances for the computer industry.

The NDP's policies in this regard are not at all consistent.

*[English]*

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is Conservative mismanagement that is taking away Canadians' jobs, not the opposition.

In response to a written question asking for basic information on temporary foreign workers, the government refused even to say who applied for labour market opinions, who got them, or where. It claimed it would be too much work. No wonder this program is failing. Given the minister's failure to fix the program, will he now agree to do the right thing and launch an independent audit?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course the Auditor General can audit whatever he deems appropriate.

The reason why those names were not released is a small detail. It is called the Privacy Act. I know the New Democrats do not have any regard for the Privacy Act when it is inconvenient for them. They may want to suggest amendments to the Privacy Act to exempt the immigration act from it.

This is an opportunity for me to recall that one of the many reforms this government has made to that program was shutting down the Liberal stripper program that issued hundreds of visas specifically and purposefully to exotic dancers from abroad who faced degradation in Canada. We ended—

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about Canadians losing jobs, but Conservative mismanagement is responsible for that. The government has had six years to fix this program, six years to make sure good jobs are not being taken from Canadians. However, the government has only made matters worse and failed Canadians and failed temporary foreign workers.

Will the minister do the right thing, admit he was wrong, and immediately ask the Auditor General to launch an independent audit?

*Oral Questions*

•(1440)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not what the member said to me when she wanted me to bring a crane operator in to work for an employer in her constituency. That is not what the New Democrats said when they asked for an LMO exemption for foreign musicians coming to Canada, against the advice of the Canadian Federation of Musicians. That is not what the New Democrats said when they lobbied me to give an exemption for people coming into the computer gaming industry, because in one of their ridings a business wanted a sectoral exemption.

Unlike the opposition, this government will ensure the integrity of this program. We will always ensure that Canadians come first, and we will address abuse and any distortion of the Canadian—

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Employment and Social Development has been a party to the increase in temporary foreign workers for some years.

When the CEO of McDonald's said that the minister gets it, he knew that the minister saw nothing wrong with McDonald's practices.

When caught in the act, the minister changed his mind and is now criticizing employers for their practices, which he himself encouraged.

Will he finally admit his mistakes?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, it was the previous Liberal government that created the stream for lower-skilled occupations in the temporary foreign worker program in 2002.

[*English*]

Talking of hypocrisy, this one takes the cake over there. We just put a moratorium on the restaurant stream. I have a letter that was sent to our embassy in Beijing that said, "I understand that a first request [for a work permit] has...been denied, but I would like to ask that you consider seriously a new request" for a restaurant that this particular person used to frequent. Who wrote this? It was the hon. member for Papineau, the leader of the Liberal Party.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, never mind that the low-skills program went from 4,300 under the Liberals to over 30,000 under the Conservatives; it is still the Liberals' fault. Never mind that the immigration processing times skyrocketed under the Conservatives' watch in 2007-12; they still say it is the Liberals' fault. Why does the minister not look in the mirror and admit to Canadians that this mess is a Conservative mess? It is his mess and nobody else's mess.

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, publicly, Liberals say it is a mess. Privately, they say the program is too tight. Publicly, they say we should shut it down.

Privately, the Liberals and New Democrats come up to me and say that fish processing plants on the east coast could not function without access to the low stream of the TFW program. They tell me that farms across Canada would shut down if the motion before us today were adopted. Thousands of farms would be unable to operate this year.

I have a question for the Liberal Party. Which opinion of theirs should I listen to: the public one here on the floor of the House, or the private one when they come over here and talk to me?

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, listening to anybody would be a good start. We know that this temporary foreign worker program under the Conservative government has grown by over 200,000 workers. We know that it equates to one in five jobs that have been created going to somebody other than a Canadian. The country has lost confidence in the government. Canadians do not trust Conservatives to run the program. They do not trust them to fix the program or certainly to undertake any kind of a study.

Will the minister, on behalf of companies across this country and Canadian workers, at least ask the Auditor General to come in and do an urgent and immediate review of this program, please?

•(1445)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course, the Auditor General is always free to study whatever subject he determines, and we always co-operate with his office; but let us not forget that it was the Liberal government that created the low-skills stream of this program in 2002. All we have done since then is to tighten the rules. All of the business groups tell us that they think the rules are far too restrictive. Liberals tell me that, privately, including—and I will not embarrass this person because I am a nice guy—the Liberal MP who came over after yesterday's question period to complain about refusals in the temporary foreign worker program. Which Liberal opinion do I listen to?

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

## THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer recently indicated that Conservative cuts are having a negative impact on our economy. By 2016, our GDP will be \$9 billion lower than what it would have been without the cuts but, more importantly, 46,000 jobs could have been and will not be created. The Conservatives' cuts directly affect the less fortunate and Canadian families, and have been made just because they want to launch an election campaign without a deficit and hand out lots of election goodies.

I would like to know when the Minister of Finance will stop putting the interests of his own party ahead of the interests of Canadians.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, balanced budgets keep taxes low, inspire investor and consumer confidence, and are vital to job creation and economic growth. Unlike previous Liberal governments, we do not balance the budget at the expense of the provinces by reducing transfers. Unlike the NDP, we will not introduce new taxes, such as the \$20 billion carbon tax on everything.

\* \* \*

[English]

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have had two weeks, and that is the best they can come up with.

Reckless Conservative cuts have hurt veterans, our environment, and our economy. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, in his latest report, said Conservative cuts are "...a drag on output and job creation".

Given this serious warning, why is the minister pushing ahead with the largest program cuts in 16 years?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government and our policies are working well for Canadians. In fact, our economy is doing better than other G7 countries. Our debt is one-half that of the G7 average. Canadians are wealthier than they ever have been before—wealthier than Americans, wealthier than the British, wealthier than the Australians.

This is a sound policy that is working for Canadians right across the country from coast to coast to coast.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, middle-income Canadians have seen stagnant wages for more than 32 years under Conservative and Liberal policies.

The latest Parliamentary Budget Officer report shows that reckless Conservative cuts will cost upward of 46,000 jobs to the Canadian economy. That is 46,000 Canadians, 46,000 people who will not see a paycheque because of choices the Conservatives have made. A string of Conservative budgets has killed more jobs than they have created.

Will the minister at least promise to do no more harm in the next budget?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, from the depths of the recession, we have created 1.1 million new jobs. Canadian wealth has never been greater. The median net worth of Canadians has increased by 45% since 2006, by over 80% since 1999, and there has been a 10% increase since 2005 in average income. Canadians have saved \$3,400 in taxes since 2006.

We are doing better than other developed countries and we will stick with a budget that works.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when the facts do not meet the ideology, the Conservatives ignore the facts, because the facts are that wages for middle-income Canadians have been stagnant for almost 32 years.

The PBO report also shows that reckless Conservative cuts will cost the Canadian economy \$9 billion. Canadian families are already

struggling to get by with record high household debt, fact; stagnant wages, fact; and a rising gap in inequality in this country, fact.

Canadians do not expect their government to do them more harm. Why is the minister choosing policies that give us less growth and fewer jobs?

● (1450)

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite does not listen very well, and apparently he does not read very well either. He seems to have a bit of a problem with numbers.

The fact is that Canadians are doing better than they ever have before. Net worth is up 80% since 1999. Net worth is up 44% since 2006. We are doing better than other countries.

If we had followed the reckless advice of the NDP, we would now not be in a position to preserve our social programs and move on to a budget surplus next year.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the father of four, I am very concerned over the unusually high number of cases of measles reported in Canada this year. A number of these cases have recently been reported in my home province of Alberta. Measles is relatively rare in Canada, thanks to high immunization rates across our country, but more work clearly needs to be done.

This week being National Immunization Awareness Week, can the Minister of Health update the House on our government's efforts to keep immunization rates in Canada high?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the truth is immunization saves lives. It is truly one of the miracles of modern science.

We want Canadians to get immunized and we want to make sure they are immunizing their kids. To help Canadians keep track of their vaccinations and protect themselves and their families from preventable illnesses, we have launched a new tool, an app called ImmunizeCA. It is available for free on iTunes and Google Play, and we encourage Canadians to download it. It not only helps parents store and manage their families' vaccination records but also makes sure they never miss a vaccine and answers questions about illness outbreaks in their areas.

I encourage all Canadians this week and going forward to make sure they get immunized and immunize their kids to protect them against preventable illnesses.

*Oral Questions***FOOD SAFETY**

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the last budget, the government claimed that they were adding more food inspectors, but now we learn Conservatives are actually cutting back, leaving the city of Vancouver without a dedicated food inspection team. The people who make sure our food is safe are now warning us that our food safety system is being pushed beyond its limits. All Canadians should be able to put a meal on the table that they know is safe for their kids.

When will the minister prioritize the safety for all Canadians and their children and put back those inspectors who are being cut from that department?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, Canada has without a doubt one of the safest and healthiest food systems in the world, and in fact the Canadian Food Inspection Agency assures me that there have been no cuts to front-line food inspectors. Since 2006 there has been a net increase of over 750 inspectors, and economic action plan 2014 just recently committed to hiring even more inspectors. This is on top of the \$500 million we have already invested. This brings almost \$1 billion in new investment into the food safety system.

As I said, we have one of the healthiest and safest food systems in the world and we are going to keep it that way.

[Translation]

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians and the NDP welcome the hiring of more food inspectors. The problem is that this is not part of the Conservative government's plans.

According to available documentation, the Food Inspection Agency has to reduce its budget by \$35 million and fire 182 inspectors in the next two years.

Canadians should not have to buy their groceries hoping not to end up with tainted food, just because the Conservatives want to have a balanced budget for the next election.

Why is the minister eliminating inspector positions?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the Leader of the Opposition himself shortly after economic action plan 2014 was announced. He said, "...there is good news in the budget with regard to food safety, including the hiring of 200 new food inspectors." "A good idea" is what is quoted.

The information the member is quoting is incorrect. CFIA reassures me that there have been no cuts of front-line food inspectors. In fact, we have invested a further \$400 million in the latest budget for food inspection and food safety, including tougher penalties, enhanced controls, new meat labelling requirements, and, of course, more than 750 new inspectors.

• (1455)

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING**

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that these measures are not enough.

It is sort of like the budget ads. When the Department of Finance carried out an online consultation with Canadians on how to balance the budget, the main response was to stop the economic action plan ads. What a failure. Even when asked for their general opinion on the economic action plan, most people no longer want to hear about the ads.

Does the minister understand that those ads are a huge waste of money?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the economic action plan has helped and will continue to help and protect Canadians during the current global economic turmoil.

The government's plan contains many measures focused on creating jobs and supporting economic growth. For the plan to be effective, it is still essential that Canadians know how to access those measures.

[English]

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I guess the opinion of Canadians just does not matter to the government.

When Finance Canada asked regular Canadians about balancing the budget, it received a huge response. The message from Canadians was crystal clear: dump the economic action plan ads, the same ads promoting programs not yet approved and that Advertising Standards Canada ruled were "misleading". Instead of promising to stop this highly partisan use of government advertising, Finance Canada just decided to stop asking questions altogether.

When will the Conservatives listen to Canadians and stop wasting money on these ads?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government listens to Canadians. Canadians are concerned about jobs, low taxes, and economic growth. That is what we have accomplished for Canadians and that is what the economic action plan has done for Canada from coast to coast to coast. We will make sure Canadians know about it and know how to access our programs.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE**

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister met with Mr. Couillard last week. They surely talked about the important issue of tolls on the Champlain Bridge. We know, through their new finance ministers, that Quebec has shared its opposition to the toll.

*Oral Questions*

Could the Prime Minister tell us whether his government plans on listening to Quebec, reversing its decision and withdrawing the plan for tolls on the Champlain Bridge?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I give the same answers about the Champlain Bridge in private as I do in public.

[English]

The reality is this. The government is building a new major local bridge in the city of Montreal. We are not doing this in any other part of the country. The only basis on which we can do that is with financial participation by the local people. That means if there is not a toll, there will not be a bridge, and that is fair to all Canadians.

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in March the Department of National Defence sent a letter to the families of fallen soldiers saying they had to pay their own way to the National Day of Honour. When I asked the minister about this in committee, he reversed course. He said that "...we can and will support those individuals".

It turns out he has broken his word. He has now off-loaded the cost to a charity, which is scrambling to raise funds to cover the expense.

Why did the minister mislead the committee, the House, and, most importantly, the grieving families?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is completely wrong. Only the Liberal Party would be offended by private organizations and individuals wanting to help and support Canada's military and our veterans.

I would ask the member to put aside her partisanship and come together with us and honour the sacrifice and courage of the Canadian military on May 9.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government was asked about contributing to the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic, a region torn apart by violence where over 600,000 people have been displaced already.

The reply was stunning and offensive. The government suggested Canadian taxpayers would object to paying for our troops to help stop mass slaughter. I respectfully ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs to apologize for the offensive comments of his parliamentary secretary and to tell us and Canadians what his plans are to prevent a potential genocide in the Central African Republic.

• (1500)

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, Canada is deeply concerned by the security and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic and by reports that people are being targeted because of their religion.

As a government, we have the responsibility and the duty to review our options thoroughly with our allies and make a determination that is in the interests of all Canadians.

[Translation]

**Ms. H el ene Laverdi ere (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the comments made yesterday by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights are inexcusable.

After the Rwandan genocide, the entire world said that the international community would act at the first sign of a potential genocide. However, the parliamentary secretary told us that this was not a good use of taxpayers' money.

Canada could play an important role and give significant support to the UN's peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic. Will the parliamentary secretary take action?

[English]

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is the ninth largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget, and it supports the United Nations, France, and the African Union efforts in this crisis.

Canada continues to pull its weight in providing over \$16 million in assistance to help meet the widespread humanitarian needs in the Central African Republic and \$5 million to support efforts by the African Union and France to restore security in the country.

We will continue to provide humanitarian and development assistance in the Central African Republic to help alleviate the country's worsening humanitarian crisis.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, organizations that support terrorism and masquerade as charitable organizations are a threat to the safety of Canadians.

IRFAN Canada has been described as a group that demonizes Israel and glorifies martyrdom and religious jihad and that has used its resources to support Hamas. Its charitable status was revoked in 2011.

Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please update the House on what the government is doing to stop IRFAN from operating in Canada?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the people from Don Valley West can be reassured, because today our government listed IRFAN Canada as a terrorist organization.

Listing terrorists is an important tool in preventing horrific terrorist attacks from being carried out.

[Translation]

When an entity is placed on the list, banks and financial institutions are required to freeze its assets, and no Canadians are allowed to have dealings with this entity.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

I count on all parties to stand with our government in supporting this security measure.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I asked about potential participation in the UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights replied as follows: "...who is going to pay to have all of these soldiers go out there? Is it Canadian taxpayers?"

My question to the parliamentary secretary is this: is cost the only consideration in the government's decision to decide whether or not it will participate in a peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic to prevent ethnic and religious cleansing? Is cost the only factor?

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me repeat. Canada is deeply concerned about the security and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic and about reports that people are being targeted because of their religion.

To date, Canada has provided over \$16 million in assistance to help meet the widespread humanitarian need and \$5 million to support efforts by the African Union and France to restore security in the country. Canada is the ninth largest contributor to the United Nations peacekeeping budget and supports the efforts of the UN, France, and the African Union efforts in this crisis.

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**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Jozsef Pusuma and his family came to Canada trying to escape the persecution they suffered in Hungary due to their human rights advocacy. Unfortunately, their lawyer botched the refugee hearing and key evidence was never presented. The Law Society has now made a finding of professional misconduct.

Will the minister stand up for the right to due process and issue a temporary residence permit to the Pusuma family to allow them to stay in Canada while their applications are reconsidered?

• (1505)

**Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has been a leader in opposing anti-Semitic activities, wherever they take place around the world, and that is not going to change.

Decisions in this case, like others involving our asylum system and refugees, were taken by the independent Immigration and Refugee Board. We have been following the case at the Law Society closely, and we will look at our options, just as we do in every case where the circumstances change and where there is a potential risk for those who are facing removal from Canada.

**FINANCE**

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians made a great financial decision by electing this Conservative government. The choice paid off with \$3,400 back to the typical family, the strongest economy in the G7, and middle-income earners that are among the wealthiest in the world.

Can the Minister of State (Finance) please tell this House about one of the steps the government is taking to protect consumers and ensure that Canadians have the skills they need to make solid financial decisions?

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has demonstrated an unprecedented commitment to enhancing financial literacy in Canada. We created the Task Force on Financial Literacy and provided new resources for the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada. We have also appointed a new financial literacy leader, Ms. Jane Rooney, to help ensure that Canadians of all ages can make solid financial decisions.

I would encourage the Liberal leader to take advantage of these important initiatives. Perhaps he can learn about the tough decisions and the focus on priorities that are necessary to balance budgets.

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**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week, on Earth Day, Canadians were stunned to learn of a rush to downgrade the protection of humpback whales from "threatened" to a classification that no longer protects their critical habitat.

The impact of tanker traffic on whale populations was a major concern during the northern gateway hearings. With the decision on this controversial pipeline project imminent, why are the Conservatives only eager to accept scientific recommendations on endangered species when pipelines stand to benefit?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we accept science all the time. We welcome this important science-based decision, as it demonstrates that the humpback whale population is growing.

Let me be perfectly clear. Any suggestion that this decision was motivated by anything other than science is categorically false. This decision was made following a recommendation from a committee of experts. I should also point out that humpback whales continue to benefit from robust protections under the Fisheries Act and under the Species at Risk Act.



*Tributes*

[Translation]

**AIR TRANSPORTATION**

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, Aéroports de Montréal, ADM, manages facilities that are of strategic importance to the economic development of the greater Montreal area. ADM manages billions of dollars' worth of contracts in a given five-year period. Security management is not supervised the same way there as it is in other sensitive facilities belonging to and controlled by the Canadian government.

To ensure transparent, accountable and secure management with a high level of integrity, will the government subject ADM to a review by the Auditor General?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Aéroports de Montréal is operated by an association, which was set up a number of years ago to ensure that we had a market-based approach to our assets in transportation. In their ground lease they have a number of obligations to the Government of Canada and to the citizens of Canada, as well. They have been doing a great job fulfilling them.

I am very proud of the work they do in Montreal, and I appreciate the comments the member made at the beginning, because they are a good success story.

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**RT. HON. HERB GRAY**

**The Speaker:** There have been discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, and I understand that we will now proceed to statements with respect to the death of our dear colleague, the Rt. Hon. Herb Gray.

I will recognize the hon. member for Papineau first.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a dedicated parliamentarian, the Rt. Hon. Herb Gray, who passed away last week at the age of 82.

[Translation]

Herb Gray had a long and brilliant career in the House. Having represented the people of Windsor West for nearly 40 years, he was one of the longest-serving MPs in Canadian history.

He won 13 elections in a row, an achievement that attests to his commitment to the voters of his riding.

● (1510)

[English]

Mr. Gray was Canada's first Jewish cabinet minister, serving in 11 different portfolios and ultimately as deputy prime minister. He was an absolute force in question period, earning praise for his unflappable style.

After he left politics in 2002, Mr. Gray served as Canadian chair of the International Joint Commission of Canada and the United States, and he was appointed to a three-year term as Carleton University's 10th chancellor.

On a personal level, I will remember Herb Gray as a great family friend and a model politician within the Liberal Party. He was universally beloved, and his dedication to serving his country was apparent to all who had the privilege of meeting him. Fiercely devoted to both his Windsor West constituents and the Canadian people at large, Herb Gray was an exemplary public servant. His impact on Canadian parliamentary life will be felt for many years to come.

[Translation]

During the Liberal leadership race in November 2012, we paid tribute to Herb Gray at the Château Laurier here in Ottawa. During the event, we celebrated his 50 years of public service and presented him with the Laurier Award for leadership.

[English]

He was feted by three former prime ministers, and I fondly remember Herb Gray's infectious sense of humour on full display throughout the night.

Speaking of his sense of humour, Herb Gray was almost equally known for his terrible handwriting. He once joked that the reason Jean Chrétien made him solicitor general was that his handwriting alone assured the security of his comments.

Even while Mr. Gray was a quick-witted, storied public figure, he remained a most dedicated family man. He was a devoted husband to his wife, Sharon; a loving father to his children, Jonathan and Elizabeth; and a doting grandfather to eight grandchildren.

[Translation]

Last Friday, we celebrated the life of Herb Gray during a very moving funeral service at his synagogue. Four former prime ministers were in attendance, which says a lot about his influence and impact on political life in Canada.

As former prime minister Paul Martin said in his eulogy, Herb Gray was a distinguished man who never engaged in a personal attack on another member of Parliament.

[English]

When I was speaking with his wife Sharon, we agreed that he would have been delighted with the accolades and tributes that have been shared in recent days, particularly in the news, for they have rightly focused on the importance Herb Gray placed on this institution, its traditions, and all those in it, regardless of their politics. Respect ran through everything he did.

Very few people can say that they have witnessed five decades inside this historic chamber. It is with great sadness that we mourn the loss of Herb Gray, but it is with pride and admiration that we reflect on his long and distinguished life as one of Canada's greatest parliamentarians.

On behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada and our parliamentary caucus, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to Sharon and to the entire family at this time. Herb, you are sorely missed.

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

*Tributes*

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to say a few words about our late departed friend and colleague, the Right Honourable Herb Gray. I remember hearing about him for the first time as a student at Queen's University in the political studies department, around 1972. He came out with the Gray report. This sparked a huge debate within university circles, and I am sure across the country, about the whole question of foreign investment in the country. Indeed, the Foreign Investment Review Agency owes its origins to that report that came out in 1972.

When I became a member of Parliament in 1984, it was an honour for me to sit across the aisle from him. I soon learned that he was greatly respected by members on all sides of the House, and rightly so. He served with great dignity and politeness. My colleagues tell me he was affectionately known as the "Gray Fog". That being said, he had considerable skill in question period. I remember when I returned in 2004, my colleague, the Hon. Jay Hill, said exactly that, that Herb had a way of calming down issues that, believe it or not, some opposition members wanted to strike up and have a little more publicity with.

In fact, our Minister of Industry has said, "He caught every fastball we threw with his bare hand and smiled—first to our frustration, then to our rhetorical astonishment and respect". That was his recollection of it. It would not be an overstatement to say that in his own quiet way he was one of the most effective parliamentarians of his generation.

Herb Gray served in the House for almost 40 years. That is a remarkable feat for anyone who has participated in public office in our country. Only Sir Wilfrid Laurier and one other 19th century MP has served longer in the House. Again, he made good use of that. As the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, he had a number of portfolios, including of course solicitor general, deputy prime minister, and of course I remember him for almost a year as leader of the opposition.

It is true to say that Herb Gray was a House of Commons man. Above all, however, he was a great Canadian, a man fully committed to our country and despite the sometimes intense partisan character of this chamber, he remained at all times a man of honour.

One of our country's great governors general, John Buchan, had this to say about the life we lead here: "Public life is regarded as the crown of a career... Politics is still the greatest and the most honorable adventure".

For almost 40 years, Herb Gray embodied those words. His life and career were indeed an honourable adventure. Therefore, on behalf of the Prime Minister, the government and all the members of the Conservative Party, I extend our condolences to Sharon and their entire family.

• (1515)

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it was with great sadness that we all learned of the passing of a tremendous parliamentarian and Canadian last week, the Right Honourable Herb Gray.

It has been my great honour to represent the same seat that he held for nearly 40 years. During his time here, my region enjoyed the

great privilege of being represented in this place by a man of dignity, character and depth.

Mr. Gray was one of a kind and served with a specific flair that could be described as understated, but nevertheless he commanded respect.

The uniqueness of his career manifested concretely in many ways. He was the first Jewish cabinet minister in Canadian history. His nearly 40 years of service in the federal legislature makes him one of the longest serving MPs ever. He is among only a handful of Canadians who did not serve as prime minister to be afforded the honorific of Right Honourable.

What is truly remarkable about his career is that he had the unquestioned respect of his colleagues across party lines. As a parliamentarian one of Mr. Gray's most defining attributes was his insistence to put his community at the centre of his work. Whether it was on the auto file, a critical industry in Windsor, or on development of our waterfront, Mr. Gray was there all the time. Even after he chose to leave electoral politics, he continued to remain engaged in the significant issues impacting our region, working to protect the Great Lakes as the Chair of the International Joint Commission.

Mr. Gray was a man of great intellect with an incredible and distinctive ability to engage his colleagues in the House. His performances in question period are legendary and affectionately earned him the nickname the "Gray Fog", an homage to his ability to reframe and rebuke opposition remarks and questions. I think he may be credited with inventing the term, "I reject the premise of the member's question", a line we continue hear in this place on a regular basis.

In Windsor, the Herb Gray legacy will live on for generations. We are already taking specific steps to tangibly commemorate his legacy with public art and infrastructure bearing his name, but his impact can be felt at a more personal level when we consider the number of citizens he impacted in the community. Whether it was inspiring people or constituents he assisted, he leaves behind an indelible mark in the social fabric of my community. With that, I want to thank all of his staff and volunteers for their service.

To the family, his wife Sharon and children Jonathon and Elizabeth, along with the member for Windsor—Tecumseh and the New Democrats, and on behalf of this entire House, I want to offer my sincerest condolences and thank you for sharing Mr. Gray with us.

As well, to friends and extended family of the Right Honourable Herb Gray, I want to thank you for supporting his tremendous service to the community we shared and the country we love.

Obviously, I am very nervous doing this. It is out of genuine respect for a man that our community loved and misses.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois would like to pay tribute to the memory of the former deputy prime minister and solicitor general, the hon. Herb Gray, who passed away last Monday. I had the honour of serving with him in the House for 18 years. He was a formidable parliamentarian who was always well prepared, respectful of his opponents and extremely hard-working.

The former member for Windsor West sat continuously in the House for 39 years, 6 months and 29 days. He holds the record for being the longest-serving MP in the House since Confederation. When he left, I jokingly told him that one day I would beat his record, and I have every intention of keeping that promise, inspired by his exemplary work in the House. He served as minister of 11 different departments. He was also leader of the official opposition and leader of the government.

In short, Mr. Gray dedicated his life to serving his fellow citizens. Even after he retired from political life, he continued his public commitment, serving with the International Joint Commission and as chancellor of Carleton University.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I extend our condolences to his family and loved ones, and I would like to take this opportunity to say that, regardless of our political affiliations in the House, we will all remember him as a great politician.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise in the House today to also say a few words in tribute to Herb Gray.

[*English*]

I had the great honour of knowing and working with Herb Gray before I was in politics, in the political sense, at all. Herb Gray, as deputy prime minister, played a key role that many members here may not know in saving the Kyoto protocol when George Bush first became president of the United States.

In the fall of 2000, the negotiations in The Hague broke down. The U.S. elections were still hanging in the balance and no one knew who would be the U.S. administration. As those negotiations broke down, they were resumed in the summer of 2001.

The minister of environment of the day, David Anderson, had fallen and was unable to attend due to a serious injury. It was a sign of the priority of the issue and that which the government of the day regarded the issue that no less than the deputy prime minister went to The Hague to negotiate on behalf of Canada.

For Herb Gray's efforts, and they were extraordinary, the organization with which I worked at the time, the Sierra Club Canada, gave him our highest award for someone in public life who served the environment. The award, by the way, Mr. Speaker, is in the name of your predecessor, John Fraser. It was the John Fraser Award for Environmental Achievement.

We had a splendid dinner honouring Herb Gray. He delivered a witty and sage address. After he left Parliament in 2002 and went on to become the Canadian Commissioner to the International Joint

### *Privilege*

Commission, which is another environmental post, I often went to visit him in his offices to discuss the Great Lakes.

He never failed to take me to this wall and say “I had so many honours for my work in public life, but I want you to notice this, Elizabeth, I have only got two of my awards that I brought with me to this office”: the citation “Right Honourable Herb Gray”, such a rare citation to anyone who has not served as a Prime Minister of Canada, and the original print from Robert Bateman with the award, the John Fraser Award for Environmental Achievement to Herb Gray. He said, “I am prouder of this and for what I did on climate change than almost anything else in public life, because my grandchildren thanked me for it”.

I will miss Herb Gray. He served his country but, in case any members did not know, he also served this planet.

• (1525)

**The Speaker:** I invite all members to rise and observe a moment of silence in memory of Herb Gray.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### PRIVILEGE

REMARKS BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, although I do not wish to delay the business of the House, I would like to revisit the issue raised yesterday in the House by the Minister of State for Democratic Reform in response to the question of privilege I raised on April 10.

I raised that question of privilege based on the fact that the minister made misleading statements in the House. He said that there were multiple reports on the Elections Canada website of people using their voter information cards to vote multiple times.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister responded to that question of privilege in the House, and I must say, I was troubled by his response, which was nothing more than an attempt to confuse the Canadian public even further on this issue, without offering any kind of real response.

[*English*]

The minister of state decided to respond to my question of privilege by citing seven cases of people voting supposedly multiple times that led to compliance agreements in the 2011 election. I would argue that citing 7 cases of approximately 15 million voters is quite a weak argument to begin with. It gets worse.

[*Translation*]

Only two of the cases cited by the minister were actually associated with voter information cards. What the minister did not mention was that these two cases were from the TV show *Infoman*. As we have said many times, these two examples cannot be used as the sole justification for banning the use of voter information cards, since they were taken from a comedy show. Furthermore, the problem is that the minister claims there are many cases, although he can only cite two, which were taken from *Infoman*.

*Business of Supply*

The minister himself stated that although the voters in question tried to vote a second time by using their voter information card, they were not able to vote. In fact, in both cases, the voters in question were told that they could not use their voter information card because their address had been crossed from the list and transferred to the second polling station they had tried to vote at.

[English]

In addition, I would like to point to the fact that only three examples used by the minister even refer to the 2011 election. Two of the examples he used were from 2006 and two were from 2004.

I also noticed that the minister avoided mentioning the names of the voters involved after his first three examples, without saying that the remaining four anonymous cases were not valid. This does raise some questions.

I believe the minister's response to my question of privilege was nothing more than an attempt to confuse Canadians with a quite long-winded statement, citing very few cases, some of which were already well known and which did not address the issue at hand. Even if the two cases from *Infoman*, where people tried and failed to use voter information cards to vote, are counted, that does not count as regular reports, which, to bring back my original point, is what the minister claimed in the House. I believe the minister might have known that his confusion tactics might not work, which was why he offered us a second argument yesterday, which in my opinion is as flawed as the first.

The minister claimed in his response that in his original statement he was making two separate points: (a) that there were regular reports of people receiving multiple cards; and (b) that there were regular reports of people voting multiple times. Thus, every case of people voting more than once would count as evidence of his original statement, but that is clearly not the case.

What the minister originally said in the House was, "There are regular reports of people receiving multiple cards and using them to vote multiple times".

It is blatantly obvious, as evidenced by the use of the word "them" in the second clause of this statement, that the minister was not making two separate points. The question the minister was asked when he made this statement was specifically about voter information cards. He clearly claimed in response that there were regular reports of people using voter information cards to vote multiple times.

Yesterday the Minister of State for Democratic Reform attempted to confuse the public and to throw mud on this whole issue instead of apologizing for what clearly appears to be misleading comments to the House. Canadians and the parliamentarians representing them deserve to be told the truth, especially by ministers and especially by the minister responsible for modifying Canada's electoral law.

Mr. Speaker, we look forward to your ruling on this matter. I thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Minister of State for Democratic Reform.

• (1530)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. This started

as a question of privilege raised by my friend suggesting that the Minister of State for Democratic Reform had misled the House by citing that there were such cases and there was no basis to that. The Minister of State for Democratic Reform provided seven such examples that are publicly available on the Elections Canada website, without even going beyond that to what other cases may exist and be reported by people individually or in the media over the years; but just those.

Now his response is that it was only a very few cases. Before it was that there were none. Now it is only a very few. Then he wants to debate the merits of it, and then he wants to debate the grammar of the Minister of State for Democratic Reform in so doing and to try to parse words. Clearly, we have gone far away from the question of privilege about misleading the House and we are entirely, 100%, foursquare in arguing the merits of the issue that is before the House in the legislation. All his comments could be best put in the category of debate, and they have no business being a question of privilege on misleading the House, and his points today make that abundantly clear.

**The Speaker:** I thank both members for their contributions at this point, and I can assure the House that I will come back with a ruling in due course.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have never heard "Infoman" mentioned in the House of Commons so much as in the last week. This is because of the Conservative Party's electoral "deform".

I am very proud to rise in the House today to speak to the NDP motion moved by my colleague from Newton—North Delta concerning the use of the temporary foreign worker program. In my opinion, the motion is perfectly reasonable and very clearly represents the concerns of the unemployed workers of this country.

We should keep in mind that 1.4 million people are looking for work in Canada. That is a huge number. These people are shocked to see that, all too often, the hiring of temporary foreign workers prevents them from getting jobs. It is a very serious concern.

The Conservative Party has shown blatant inaction in this matter. For years, the Conservatives have let the numbers skyrocket and have closed their eyes to requests that were unjustified and unjustifiable, even to their own eyes, depriving Quebeckers and Canadians of good jobs.

This is why the NDP motion calls for a moratorium on the stream for lower-skilled occupations, but, above all, calls on the auditor general to conduct an urgent audit of the whole program. The whole program must be reviewed.

*Business of Supply*

The Minister of Employment may be surprised to hear me say this, and I can see him coming a mile away, but the temporary foreign worker program is necessary. We are not questioning the existence of the program, because it is part of what makes our economy tick.

I represent a Montreal riding, but I come from Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. I remember summers in my youth when I spent many hours under a burning sun picking strawberries and raspberries so that I could afford to buy myself certain things.

Today, not enough people from the region are helping the farmers by doing jobs like that. We need people from outside to give us a hand during the summer. Clearly, farmers could not do without these workers. That is also true in other sectors.

Let us not forget that the purpose of this program is to fill gaps in our labour market, to address labour shortages or labour training needs. We must be careful to ensure that bringing in a temporary foreign worker will never prevent a Canadian or Quebecker from getting work.

The Conservatives' inaction has caused the dramatic situations we have seen in the media all because they quite simply washed their hands of the whole thing. Maybe they were just as happy to bring in cheap labour to put downward pressure on wages. They were so intent on getting cheap labour that budget 2012 provided for employers to pay temporary foreign workers 15% less for the same jobs and the same work. If that is not downward pressure on wages, then I do not know what is. This caused such an uproar that the Conservatives had to withdraw this measure, which fortunately was never applied.

The second point I want to make today has to do with how temporary foreign workers are treated. We have to understand the situation they are in. The NDP thinks that we should better protect temporary foreign workers. If we really need these people, then we should make them Canadian citizens. Then they would have rights. As things stand, far too often these people are exploited and forced to pay for room and board. Some even end up in substandard or dangerous working situations.

They almost never complain because that often causes them to be sent back to their country of origin and to lose their pay, which affects them and their families. We must ensure that these workers can organize, have rights and defend themselves. That is essential if we want to ensure respect for these people who deserve to work in safe conditions and receive a decent income, even though they are not yet Canadian citizens.

• (1535)

I am thinking about domestic workers who are hired as nannies or housekeepers and do not have the right to change employers during their time here. That leads to cases of serious abuse, harassment and molestation. The victim knows full well that she cannot change employers. If she decides to do so, her contract will be terminated and she will have to go home. I have often met with people from the Filipino domestic workers' association in Montreal. They have educated me about their reality. We need to keep this in mind when we are talking about the temporary foreign worker program.

Some of the numbers are quite revealing. The number of people who have come here through this program increased considerably while the Liberals were in power. However, it has risen exponentially under the Conservatives.

Between 2002 and 2012, the number of temporary immigrant workers in Canada more than tripled, increasing from approximately 100,000 to nearly 340,000. I doubt that labour market needs tripled between 2002 and 2012.

It is really astounding. Since the Conservatives came to power, the number of immigrants who come as temporary workers has surpassed the number of economic immigrants who settle as permanent residents. We are bringing in more cheap labour, people who often take jobs away from Quebeckers and Canadians, instead of making people Canadian citizens when they apply as economic immigrants. The system is completely unbalanced.

Under the Conservatives' reign, we have far too often seen labour market opinions get rubber-stamped. Anything and everything is given the green light. No one checks to make sure that there really is a shortage in a given place or region or that there really is a need for foreign temporary workers, without whom the work would not get done.

I spoke about the agriculture sector earlier, but we are now seeing that the hotel and restaurant sector is starting to use the program, as is the banking sector. I was in British Columbia a few months ago. I met with people from a stage technicians union. They, too, had a problem because it was cheaper to hire the American stage technicians who were coming to work in Vancouver. Canadian workers were not being hired. This is a problem even in the arts and culture sector.

During the first year under the Conservative watch, in 2006, the number of temporary foreign workers in lower-skilled job categories, at places like Tim Hortons and McDonald's, doubled over 2005. The following year, between 2006 and 2007, that number went up by 419%. In just one year, there was a jump of 419% in all lower-skilled occupations. Is there really no one in Canada, in Hamilton or Rimouski, who can serve coffee and doughnuts or sell fries and Big Macs at McDonald's?

That is the question we have to ask ourselves. That is the question my colleague from British Columbia is asking us and the House through this motion. The Conservatives keep saying that they are going to take action and that this is unacceptable, but the cases are multiplying. There are more and more cases.

Of all Canadian industries, the hotel and restaurant sector is the one with the highest number of labour market opinions. That is the authorization employers have to request from the department. In 2012, there were 44,740 positive labour market opinions, which is an increase of 926% over 2006. The consequences are very real.

*Business of Supply*

Let me just give the example of Sandy Nelson. She worked in a restaurant in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. She was a waitress for 28 years in that restaurant. She provided her services to the employer without ever being reprimanded or disciplined. She was a model worker who dedicated her entire career to the clients of the restaurant. Last week, we found out that she was replaced by a temporary foreign worker, even though she was there and doing her job.

We have seen several examples in the mining sector, in British Columbia and Alberta. According to a study by the C.D. Howe Institute, if the temporary foreign worker program were not abused to such an extent in Alberta and British Columbia, the unemployment rate would drop by 4%. That is unbelievable.

• (1540)

I congratulate my colleague for this motion. I hope that all parliamentarians will stand up in the House to support Quebec and Canadian workers.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member would provide a fairly precise answer to a question I think many might be somewhat concerned about. We have recognized the valuable role that a well-functioning temporary worker program could actually play, in terms of contributing to Canada's prosperity. Nowhere is that more important than in an area such as agricultural community.

Would the member give a clear indication whether the moratorium the NDP is referring to in the motion would, in any way, have an impact upon the agricultural community and if so, in what way?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to have to once again contradict the Minister of Employment and Social Development.

I would first like to point out that the NDP believes that this program is necessary and that it should be kept. However, Canadian workers and temporary foreign workers who come to help us out as needed should not suffer because of the program. A moratorium would allow us to keep what we have. Accordingly, farmers who already have temporary foreign workers and who need them will continue to get them. There is no reason to worry.

The NDP is acting responsibly and the moratorium will address current needs. However, at the same time, we will ask the auditor general to conduct a thorough audit of the entire program because this government is incapable of managing it.

• (1545)

[*English*]

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is rather humorous to see that the member for the official opposition did not know how to answer the question about the implications of his party's motion. Let me explain it to him.

It calls for a moratorium on the stream for lower-skilled occupations. The reasonable question from the member for

Winnipeg North was whether this applies to agriculture, and the answer is, yes.

The answer is that the NDP's policy would put a moratorium on the admission of workers from abroad coming to work in our agricultural industry, including both the seasonal agricultural workers program and the general agricultural workers stream, both of which are considered elements of the low-skilled streams in the TFWP. This would have the impact of, essentially, shutting down thousands of farms around Canada just as they are going into the agricultural season. The economic impact of that would be truly devastating in many parts of rural Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that the minister would have more credibility if he were able to show us that he can tell the difference between the cancellation of the program and a moratorium. He is not making that distinction. Well, that is fine. We are nevertheless asking him to vote in favour of this motion.

It is even more ironic given that he has completely suspended access of the food services industry to the temporary foreign worker program. Perhaps he favours farmers and could not care less about restaurant owners.

He could have much more credibility. In fact, he boasted about the fact that he was given a blacklist of poor employers that use the temporary foreign worker program and it took him three years to write down the name of just one business that was abusing the program.

I do not believe that the Conservative party, or this government, has any credibility when it comes to protecting Canadian workers.

**Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the Conservative government has really mismanaged this issue. However, the NDP has a number of proposals to help workers access the job market.

Can my colleague comment on how the NDP would help Canadians access the job market? For example, can he talk about our proposal to create a tax credit for training young workers?

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question, and I will give her a very good answer.

Actually, everything that has to do with training workers, with apprenticeship, is part of the solutions that the NDP has put forward, especially for young people whose unemployment rate is much higher than the Canadian average.

The NDP has also proposed a job creation tax credit for the small and medium-sized businesses that drive the economy in so many of our communities.

Instead of bringing in people from other countries, such as foreign pilots in the air transportation industry, we need to invest in and train our own workers so that we do not have to bring people in from other countries. We need to train our fellow citizens so they can be qualified for the jobs that are available, and most importantly, we need to create new jobs.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

Let me begin by defining terms because I find that there is fairly widespread confusion about what actually constitutes what we call the temporary foreign worker program. To be honest, I think it is a misnomer. When most people hear the words “temporary foreign worker program”, they tend, immediately and quite logically, to associate it with efforts by employers to apply to bring in workers from abroad at various skill levels. They particularly tend to associate it with low-skilled positions. However, we need to understand that, in fact, only 38% of the so-called temporary foreign workers who are admitted to Canada each year are attached to a labour market opinion.

Let me explain for folks who may not understand what a labour market opinion, or LMO, is. This is the process that the government has long established, administered by Service Canada, to ensure that employers inviting someone to work from abroad have first made every reasonable effort to hire and recruit Canadians to do the work and that the employers have demonstrated to Service Canada that no Canadians are available or willing to do the work at what is called the prevailing regional wage rate. They have to satisfy various requirements with respect to advertising that have actually been lengthened due to one of our reforms last year. They have to advertise the position for eight weeks in various media at the prevailing regional wage rate.

Let me be clear about that point, too. There is an urban legend that the temporary foreign worker program actually constitutes a systematic undercutting of Canadian wage rates when that is not true. In fact, employers cannot get permission through LMOs to invite workers from abroad unless, for eight weeks, they have advertised that position at the median wage for that occupational category in their regions. The median wage, by definition, means being paid more than about half the people in that particular occupation in that community because when an employer goes to hire, say, Canadians at a restaurant or any other business, they are typically starting at a starting wage and they will work up the pay grade with the passage of time. We do not allow employers applying for foreign workers to pay the starting wage or the minimum wage, per se, but, rather, the median wage in that occupational category, which is typically more than what many Canadians are getting paid even in the same workplace. Those are some of the safeguards that currently exist.

If an employer can demonstrate that it advertised a position at that wage rate for eight weeks and made every reasonable effort to recruit Canadians, but did not receive any applications from qualified people willing to work, then Service Canada will, in principle, approve a labour market opinion and permit that employer to recruit someone from abroad to fill what apparently is a skills shortage in that occupation in that community.

As I said, we have tightened up the rules around, for example, acquiring a longer period of employment. We ask more questions of the employers now to ensure that they really have made an effort to recruit from within Canada. We now charge employers a cost

recovery fee of \$275 for that labour market opinion application and starting shortly, we are going to initiate the obligation for applicants for labour market opinions to file what we are calling a transition plan to demonstrate to us how they plan to increase the percentage of workers on their site who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents and reduce their dependence or reliance on the temporary foreign worker program.

As a result of those reforms that we have already implemented, we have seen a 30% reduction in the number of applications for LMOs in the low-skilled stream and a 20% reduction overall. We also, of course, suspended the accelerated labour market opinion process, which means the processing times are much longer. Many immigration practitioners, lawyers, and employers will complain bitterly about the length of time it takes to approve an LMO, which is evidence of the kind of rigour that I believe Service Canada is applying to these applications.

● (1550)

It is important, however, to recognize that what I just referred to alludes to the labour market opinion stream, which is really what most of us call the temporary foreign worker program. Just as a matter of interest, about 35% of the foreign nationals coming in through labour market opinion work permits are higher skilled; 26% are general lower-skilled workers and that would tend to include most of the people we are talking about, for example, in the service, restaurant, and accommodation industries; 8% come into the live-in caregiver program, so-called nannies; and 31% come through the seasonal agricultural worker program. I should point that some of the 26% of LMO linked foreign workers who are in the general low-skilled stream are going to farms as well in what we call the general agricultural stream.

It is important to break these down because among the higher-skilled stream there are a lot of people in professions, scientific occupations, and technical positions and trades. It is quite shocking for most people to learn that four of the five source countries for the so-called temporary foreign worker program are the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and France, all highly developed and wealthy countries. The plurality of occupations in this element of the program are high skilled.

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I know that does not accord with most people's common understanding of the program. They tend to think it is primarily people from the developing world coming into low-skilled positions and there is a lot of that. But in fact, the lion's share of so-called temporary foreign workers who are basically foreign nationals coming here on work permits, are people coming from developed countries. Germany is in the top 10 as well. In the top 10 source countries, I believe 6 or 7 are highly developed G20 or G7 countries.

For example, a university professor, let us say a scientist, who is on an exchange with a Canadian university is a temporary foreign worker. A lawyer from New York who is moving to Toronto for six months to work on a complex deal is a temporary foreign worker. This is entirely normal. I do not think it is terribly contentious. This kind of labour mobility we have facilitated has always existed, so that is just to put some context here.

Now what about the other 62%? That is nearly two-thirds of what we call the flow or population of temporary foreign workers, do not come in with a labour market opinion. They come in typically through reciprocal agreements that we have to facilitate normal conventional mobility of people around the world. Let us not get trapped in a kind of parochialism or unintentional xenophobia in this debate. Let us remember we are a trading country and exporting country. We do not just export goods. We also export services and that means exporting Canadians who work around the world.

There are something like 2.3 million Canadian citizens living more or less long-term abroad and hundreds of thousands of them are living on work permits in foreign countries, typically making very good incomes. For every Canadian who is a professor at Oxford, or a financial manager in Hong Kong, or who is perhaps an executive at a high tech company in the Silicon Valley, every one of those Canadians, unless they have obtained citizenship in that country, is working on a work permit. All of that would shut down, all of those hundreds of thousands of Canadians working around the world making typically very good incomes and helping in the export of Canadian services, they would all have to come home if we were to shut down the reciprocal agreements we have that facilitate labour mobility around the world.

In that 62% of this program, we are talking about 133,000 entries in 2012, 29,000 were coming in under free trade agreements and agreements we have with provinces and territories that can exempt certain categories of foreign workers.

● (1555)

When we signed NAFTA in 1993, it included a labour mobility provision. Various occupations were given a certain quota of trilateral visas, so a Canadian lawyer who does a lot of work in Mexico and the States or an American physician who for some reason has a practice in all three countries can get a trilateral NAFTA visa to go to Mexico, to the United States, and to Canada. To be honest, I have never heard a complaint about this arrangement. This a normal, conventional part of facilitating high-skilled labour mobility.

However, the single biggest chunk of this is actually in what we call International Experience Canada, a program based on a number of bilateral reciprocal agreements we have with other jurisdictions, primarily visa-exempt countries that we consider low risk from an

immigration integrity point of view. About 59,000 people, or basically a quarter of the total population of the so-called temporary foreign workers, came into Canada under that stream.

I hear some people—not many, but some—saying, “What are you doing by allowing these foreigners to come in and take jobs from our young people?” The point is that these are reciprocal programs, so right now there are thousands of young Canadians between the ages of 18 and 35 working in Australia. Tens of thousands altogether are working in countries like Australia, New Zealand, France, the United Kingdom, and around the world. If we were to freeze or suspend or shut down this International Experience Canada program, all of those nice young Canadians' reciprocal agreements would be shut down and they would have to get on a plane and come back here to Canada. I really do not think that in 2014, with a global economy that is increasingly sophisticated, we would want that to happen.

By the way, I would argue that there is an advantage to us as a country in having a limited, reasonable number of bright young people from around the world coming here and getting to know Canada, working here for a few months and becoming interested in and attached to this country. A small number of them might go on to become permanent residents, and that is great. All of them probably will have a future connection to Canada, which would likely be to our commercial and economic advantage. That is a quarter of the whole population of temporary foreign workers.

I make this point and set this context because the entire debate, perhaps understandably, has a tendency to focus just on a relatively small number of problematic cases. I will turn my attention to that aspect, because we do not want to ignore the problematic issues that may exist in the program. That is why we have been working on tightening up the program and reforming it. It is why we reduced the number of LMO applications. It is why we have been working on a package that I intend to announce in the next few weeks as a further tightening of the program. It is because we want to ensure that on the one hand we facilitate legitimate conventional global labour mobility and address real skills gaps that may exist in certain regions in Canada, but that on the other hand we prevent any distortions of the Canadian labour market and any abuse of the program.

That is the objective. I hope that in this debate we can identify some common principles. I would advocate that the principle be that we are an open, confident trading country, not one characterized by xenophobia and parochialism. We want to facilitate legitimate movement of people; obviously we do not want to do it in a way that ends up distorting our labour market or displacing Canadians, but we do want to open up those opportunities for Canadians to work around the world. That is exactly what we are trying to do.

One of the issues that has come up here in the debate was a suggestion that we increase pathways to permanent residency for foreign nationals who are here on work permits. I have happy news for the House: we have already done exactly that. In fact, we have increased by several hundred per cent the number of so-called temporary foreign workers who are now obtaining permanent residency in Canada.



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•(1600)

We did this as a government primarily by massively expanding, by about eightfold, something called the provincial nominee programs. These are programs we have with nine provinces. Quebec, of course, has its own immigration selection process. The nine provinces outside of Quebec collectively get to select about 45,000 permanent residents. The vast majority of those 45,000 permanent residents are actually already in Canada on a work permit, so they have demonstrated that they are good workers and they are filling the skills gap. If they want to stay in Canada and the employer likes them and wants to carry them on, they apply for permanent residency.

We also created something called the Canadian experience class, which should have been done a long time ago. We opened this program in 2008, and now we get about 12,000 or 15,000 permanent residents a year through that program. These are higher-skilled foreign workers and foreign students who have done at least 12 years of work in Canada, and they can now get permanent residency.

In addition to that, the live-in caregiver program is a pathway to permanent residency. As well, a growing number of foreign nationals on work permits in Canada apply for other immigration programs, so altogether about 60,000 people who are here on work permits become permanent residents.

This is perhaps a bit of a news flash to some people, because the number used to be about 5,000 a decade ago. There has been a huge growth. That is a positive thing. People can come to see if they like Canada and see if they can get through the winter. If they are working gainfully and enjoy the country and then want to stay and settle and maybe even invite their families over, if they qualify for one of these streams, they can do so.

The point is, however, that not every temporary resident on a work permit wants to stay permanently. The biggest stream is the youth mobility program, which is made up mostly of those Aussies and Kiwis who come and work at our ski hills in Whistler and whatnot. They work part time. They may coach skiing or they may work in the service industry at one of our ski resorts. They are on a walkabout in their gap year, and most of them really do not want to stay permanently in a cold country like Canada. They want to get back to the Gold Coast. Let us not be so presumptuous as to assume that every one of these particularly higher-skilled people from developed countries who constitute the plurality of participants in the program actually wants to stay.

Finally, let me address the very legitimate concern that the NDP raises today about abuse and distortions in the labour market.

First, this is a complex issue. The aggregate labour market information is very clear. We are not facing and do not have a general labour shortage in Canada, but there is enormous data to suggest that there are skills gaps in certain sectors and regions. If we live in Toronto or Montreal, maybe that just does not have the ring of truth to it, but I would invite those people to go and talk to employers in, for example, the fast-growing communities of much of western Canada, which are at full employment and where young people can find high-paying jobs without any difficulty at all, leaving a lot of the essentially lower-paying positions in the service

industry without adequate staff. That is also true in the agricultural sector.

I get this everywhere I go. I get it from the St. John's Board of Trade. I get it from the employers in Labrador. I get it from parts of northern Quebec where the mining is. I get it from the computer programming industry in Montreal. I get it from the information technology industry in the Kitchener-Waterloo corridor. I get it from the food processing industry in many parts of the country, and not just for the food service industry but also for skilled trades in certain areas, such as northern Alberta. Every major business group in the country says this is an issue. We cannot ignore it. We do not want to go into denial.

That said, if and when we see abuses, we are taking and will take serious action. The blacklist is now up and running. We have added employers to it that cannot use that program in the future. I have put those really abusive employers on notice that I intend to refer evidence of fraud in their LMO applications to the CBSA for criminal investigations.

We were concerned with the growing number of reports of abuse, particularly in the food services sector. I think the vast majority of employers there are honest people who want to abide by the rules, but I do think there has been some slippage. It is hard to put a precise figure on it, but it is enough to be very concerning, which is why I announced a moratorium last week on the temporary foreign worker program in the food services sector pending the outcome of our review.

This demonstrates how serious we are, and again I would invite constructive ideas from all members as to how we can strike the right balance to be an open country, benefit from the talents of others from around the world, and ensure reciprocal movement of Canadians, yet also avoid distortion of our labour market, displacement of Canadians, or abuse of the program.

•(1605)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, having heard the minister give us a history and explanation of the different types of temporary foreign worker programs, I want to let him know that I certainly understand the different streams. What I want to stipulate again is that our motion here does not cover the category known as the seasonal agricultural worker program. In no way was it meant to capture that program. At the same time, I heard the minister saying that recently he has heard of some egregious abuses of this program by some people.

I want to ask him a really simple question today about the LMOs that are given out by his department. Here we are in Victoria, where we have not just one but 26 fast food outlets that were granted LMOs in an area where the youth unemployment rate for entry level jobs is at 15%.

Having that information and having the information on HD Mining, RBC, and the ironworkers, is it not time for an independent audit? Then let us sit down together and build a program that will really serve all Canadians.

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• (1610)

**Hon. Jason Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her thoughtful points and reasonable question. I agree with her observation about the situation that we learned about with the McDonald's franchises in Victoria. As I said publicly, I really have to question why there would be a demonstrable shortage of food service workers at that level in an urban area with a youth unemployment rate of 14%.

I could perhaps understand it in remote rural communities with super-hot labour markets and full employment where young people could easily get \$30-an-hour jobs, but I am concerned about that situation. That is exactly why I put in place the moratorium on that sector. It is also why I called the presidency of McDonald's Canada to express my very grave concern about the practices that we learned of.

In terms of an audit, the whole program is partly based on audits. We do spot checks. Highly trained public servants go in and do spot checks. We now have new legislative authority, which I forgot to mention, that came into effect last December and allows Service Canada to go to work sites unannounced, pull up the paperwork, do the interviews, and dig down to see where there might be instances of abuse. It is my intention to add further to those audit powers of Service Canada.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the minister for one thing, which is giving a speech to give the impression that everything is just hunky-dory when in fact we are in the middle of a huge political mess, perhaps the biggest of his career.

With regard to the doubling of the temporary foreign workers, even the C.D. Howe Institute has said that it has added to joblessness. We have all of these revelations from McDonald's and others that it has been totally inappropriately administered. Yes, the minister is tightening that policy, but it is only in response to past loosening, which generated this huge growth.

When we impose a moratorium, it is a last resort. It is like a huge sledgehammer being brought down on everybody. The good apples and the bad apples both get hurt. Why did the minister not, over the past years, take a more surgical approach that would have weeded out the bad apples without allowing the system to get to this point of crisis, whereby so many legitimate, law-abiding businesses are also hurt by his sledgehammer approach?

**Hon. Jason Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the premise of the question. It is a matter of objective fact that it was the previous Liberal government, in 2002, of which I believe he was a member, that introduced what is called the general low-skilled stream, which seems to be the subject of most of the criticism now. The administration of the program was so lax that the Liberals actually had what became known as the Liberal stripper program. Six hundred work permits a year were issued to exotic dancers. That was the Liberal idea of how to run the temporary foreign worker program —

**An hon. member:** You supported it.

**Hon. Jason Kenney:** No, we shut it down, Mr. Speaker. We passed legislation and regulations. It is over. It is done.

In terms of the growth in the number of foreign nationals on work permits in Canada, let us look at the part that is being criticized most. The part that is being criticized most is the general low-skilled stream. That includes service workers, in most cases. In 2006, 6,500 people were admitted, and last year it was 20,000, so that is up by 14,000. That is significant, but it is not by the hundreds per cent.

Most of the growth was in areas like the free trade agreements, going from 16,000 people to 25,000; and reciprocal agreements, going from 34,000 people to 63,000. Reciprocal agreements allow Canadians to work abroad, and there are short-term visas that allow young people to come to Canada to learn about our country. Spouses and common-law partners doubled from 6,300 to 12,000. Those are university professors and lawyers. A high-skilled temporary foreign worker comes here, and she gets to ensure that her husband gets a work permit while he is in Canada. These are where we have seen the largest growth, in research and studies. The member for Markham—Unionville is an academic. I am sure he is pleased to know that the number of foreign researchers contributing at our universities has tripled from 4,000 to 11,000.

Let us look at this based on the facts and not on the myths.

• (1615)

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has done an excellent job on a very difficult file.

I would like to ask the minister how he calculates the demand for temporary foreign workers, in light of our diverse economy and the growth in some sectors that are just booming, especially in the context of commodities and other specific types of manufacturing and so on. It seems positive that we have temporary foreign workers helping our economy grow while we are taking decisive action on those few employers that abuse the system.

**Hon. Jason Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I know the member speaks to the particular local context, because there are many communities in southern Manitoba that are at full employment. Without any access to this program, they would have to radically reduce their operations, lay Canadians off, and in some places, shut their doors. One example of that would be the Maple Leaf pork processing plant in Brandon, Manitoba, but there are many others. I was in Winnipeg on the weekend hearing from employers about these issues.

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What we are trying to say is that where there are clearly bona fide skill and labour shortages, where there are jobs that Canadians just are not applying for, even though the wage rate is reasonably high, there should be limited access to this option as a last resort. However, we need tension in the system, and that is really what we are trying to get to here. We need tension so that employers do not think first about applying for people from abroad but think first about raising their wage rates; increasing their investments in training; recruiting energetically among under-represented groups in the labour force, including young Canadians, aboriginal Canadians, disabled Canadians, and newer immigrants; and recruiting in regions in Canada with high unemployment. When employers are looking at options one to ten, the first three options should be raising wages, investing in training, and recruiting Canadians. Only if none of those things have worked should they have limited access to this program.

After a transition plan is put into effect, they will have to file with their labour market opinion application evidence of how they are going to recruit more Canadians so that they can be less dependent on the TFW program.

I will be blunt. There are some employers who have become too used to this program, partly because they think it enhances their productivity. These workers tend to be very reliable, but we do not want them to end up displacing Canadians, intentionally or otherwise. That is why we will be making additional reforms to the program.

[Translation]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Pierrefonds—Dollard.

I am pleased to speak to the motion of the member for Newton—North Delta today. This motion deals with the challenges we are facing with regard to the temporary foreign worker program, which has made the headlines a lot recently, particularly last week with the story about McDonald's and the rather harsh comments made by the company's CEO.

As the official opposition's youth critic, I have a unique perspective on this situation. The Standing Committee on Finance is wrapping up its study of youth unemployment, an issue that is related to the motion before us. I will come back to that in a moment.

To begin, it is important to talk about the content of today's motion. We have heard many Conservative members, including the minister, bragging about the program and talking about all of the areas where there is a need for skilled workers. In his speech, the minister listed the various industries that need these workers and that could benefit from this program.

Our motion deals primarily with low-skilled occupations, which is a specific area. We do not want the program to be cancelled. We simply want a moratorium to be imposed. That would give parliamentarians and especially the Auditor General—and this brings me to the second point of the motion—to examine the program and get to the bottom of the problems raised in cases that have been in the media recently but that have been going on for months or even years.

Despite the government's supposed willingness to improve this program, this motion provides an opportunity to get an independent opinion from the Auditor General and an actual report from an independent office, rather than listening to the government's rhetoric and relying on its good faith. This will enable us, as parliamentarians and legislators, to improve this program. We do not want to do away with the program, but there are some major problems with it that will require serious solutions.

Of all the low-skilled areas of work, the most commonly cited examples involved jobs in the fast-food industry. That is especially troubling because, temporary foreign worker program aside, there is another problem, not with youth unemployment but rather with youth underemployment.

According to a Statistics Canada report released two weeks ago, just over a decade ago, most young people working in fast food, at McDonald's and Tim Hortons, for example, and in similar areas, had a high school education or less. Now the majority of young people working in these areas are overqualified. Most have post-secondary education, often at a high level. Some have university degrees.

The problem—which has been raised at the Standing Committee on Finance—is that these young people are not counted as part of the statistics on youth unemployment. They are working, so the government boasts about job creation, but they are obviously working in fields for which they are far too overqualified and they are not meeting needs elsewhere.

I think that members from all the parties agree that the purpose of the temporary foreign worker program should be to bring people here and allow them to make a positive contribution to our communities and our economy, as they do when it comes to employment. We are always more than happy to come up with the best ways to bring people here.

● (1620)

Nonetheless, we want them to come here to do specialized work, where there is truly a labour shortage, and not to fill jobs where there might be an adverse effect on the entire population working in that area.

For example, consider the downward pressure on salaries that is going to affect those same young people I was just talking about. This is not just about getting laid off. These young people are fighting to get a certain number of hours of work in these jobs. As such, they might not necessarily be let go, but their employer will take away a significant number of hours and give them to temporary foreign workers instead, especially in that industry.

The reality is grim. With this motion, we are calling for a moratorium. Essentially, we want to press “pause”. We want to take this opportunity to ask an independent authority to study the issue. The government's words rarely or never seem to lead to real action. Now we will have a report to show how we can fix this program to be sure that its real objectives, objectives that benefit all Canadians, are met.

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Let us look at the positive aspect of the program and talk about the skills shortage. It is interesting, because this also shows another aspect of the problem, which is the government's management of this file. We have heard a lot about the famous—or infamous—Kijiji economy, when data was created on Kijiji and other places. Jokes aside, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that these data regarding the skills shortage are inadequate. This is nothing new. It has been around for some time now.

I want to get back to the study on youth unemployment, which we talked about in 2012 and even before that in 2011. This issue was raised in the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. We were studying the fact that all of the authorities and even the public service were saying that there was a big problem with the collection of workforce data. It was necessary to improve the analysis of the population's skills and the realities of the job market. The committee, including the Conservative members, decided to recommend that the government look at ways to improve its data collection, to find out how to get better information to understand the realities of the job market.

All parties agree that the job market is going through a considerable transformation. When we look at this entire situation, it is very disturbing to see that the government does not even have access to accurate information. Once again, this is yet another reason to ask the Auditor General to look into this issue. At the risk of repeating myself, an independent authority must examine the temporary foreign worker program.

It is important to point out that this is not an irresponsible proposal. As my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie put it so well earlier today, it is important to distinguish between “cancellation” and “moratorium”.

As I said earlier in my speech, all members of this House agree that we want Canada to be a welcoming country. We want to allow people from other countries who have very specialized, specific skills to come here and help build our communities, improve our economy and fill the gaps in the labour market. However, this must be done in an harmonious, balanced way, which is clearly not the case.

Even though these problems may not be widespread, as the minister claims, there is no reason for the Conservatives to refuse an investigation by the Auditor General. This will simply prove that these are isolated problems and it will be even easier to solve them, as we hope to do with our motion.

I am very pleased to support the motion and I invite my colleagues across the aisle to do the same.

• (1625)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the deputy leader of the Liberal Party clearly indicated that we believe that Canada's Auditor General needs to be brought into the situation. We have expressed that to the Auditor General. We hope that sort of expression of interest in having the Auditor General engaged on this file would be somewhat unanimous here inside the House, because we believe in the importance of the program and

Canadians getting that first opportunity for employment. That is the way in which the program was designed.

There is a second component or another issue in relation to the motion the NDP is proposing, and I would like clarification. Could the member specifically indicate if the motion would have an impact in any way on temporary foreign workers who would be used in our agricultural communities? It is a very important question. I am wondering if he can give a clear indication as to whether or not the NDP motion has any impact on temporary foreign workers for our agricultural communities.

• (1630)

[Translation]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite simple: no. He is talking about a different program. Earlier today I heard my colleague from Newton—North Delta, the NDP critic in this area, clarify the same thing for the minister. We are really talking about low-skilled occupations. A specific program is being assessed. The program we are talking about is not the same one.

I think it is important to revisit the argument that I often raised in my speech, specifically that regardless of the sectors that will be affected by the matter before us today, we do not want anything to be cancelled. We would like a moratorium until the government figures out how to properly manage this file and the Auditor General has time to examine the issue, as the motion indicates. We could then make the necessary changes to the motion. The program could therefore remain positive, without creating all the major problems that have been raised recently but that we have known about for some time.

[English]

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there was no answer in that response, so let me respond to the question from the member for Winnipeg North again. When I last answered, he had left the House, which is unusual. I thought he lived here.

The answer is that the NDP motion calls for an immediate moratorium on the stream for lower-skilled occupations.

I am the minister and I can certify that the agricultural streams are considered lower skilled, so it is clear that the impact of the motion would be to suspend both the seasonal agriculture worker program and the general agricultural worker stream, which is a subset of the general lower-skilled worker stream.

Perhaps that is not the NDP's intention. I take the member for Newton—North Delta at her word that it was not, apparently, the intention. Perhaps the NDP would like to amend this, because I know the member for Newton—North Delta knows very well that there are a lot of farmers in the Fraser Valley who will be paying her a visit this weekend if in fact she calls for shutting down their berry farms. Therefore, let us have a friendly amendment to the motion.

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[Translation]

**Mr. Matthew Dubé:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is not asking that we shut down farms in her region. The problem we are dealing with today was caused by the government's mismanagement. We have to ask for a moratorium so that an independent authority, specifically the Auditor General, can examine the issue. Had the government put its foot down, as they say, instead of waiting for the media to break the story, as in the case of McDonald's, we could have already fixed the problems instead of always blaming the Liberals, although they, too, must answer for their mismanagement of the program.

The bottom line is that we are asking for a moratorium, and not the cancellation of the program, so that the Auditor General has the time to review it. It is unfortunate that the Conservatives have pushed us to this point. One would think that a government that claims to be a good manager would have better managed this program.

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the opposition motion.

First of all, this motion calls for all parties in the house to recognize that there have been abuses of the temporary foreign worker program, and I believe that everyone can admit that. It is not just the media that have been talking about this. Abuses have been noted for a number of years and this is not really a point of debate.

The motion also calls for action to be taken—real action, this time—in response to the repetitive abuses of recent years. I will talk about how the Conservative government has tried to fix the problems with its own program, which it then changed, creating the problems we see today.

First of all, the motion asks the government to impose an immediate moratorium on the stream for lower-skilled occupations. Why impose a moratorium? I explained why earlier. We have waited too long. The government has tried to close the loopholes one measure at a time where it could, knowing that various problems have been going on for years. However, with the scandals that are in the news right now, the government can no longer continue to say that it is going to take action and that it is going to put a small band-aid on a hemorrhaging wound hoping that people will forget about it until the next scandal occurs. The government really needs to stop doing that.

Secondly, the motion proposes asking the Auditor General to conduct an in-depth audit to determine the shortcomings of the existing program so that solutions can be implemented. Once again, I am not talking about band-aid solutions, but real solutions that will address the real problems created by this program.

I think this motion is extremely worthwhile. It responds to the existing temporary foreign worker crisis, and I would be very interested in seeing all of the parties rise in the House to call for serious action to be taken against the abuse of this program.

I would like to provide clarification on a point that has often been raised by my Conservative colleagues. The NDP is not opposed to temporary foreign workers, far from it. I would like to talk about a case in my riding where the need for temporary foreign workers is quite real.

● (1635)

[English]

I want to talk about the Murugan Temple.

This temple was built by incredibly hard-working Tamil people in my community. Many years ago, they had a dream and they collected a lot of money to build a temple for their community. They bought the land and built it one step at a time. They invited an engineer from their home country to make sure the temple would be a source of pride for the community. Indeed, it has an incredibly unique architecture that we can see from the highway. It is a beautiful temple, and I wish members could see it for themselves.

This temple is a cornerstone of our community now and serves a very large Tamil community in the West Island. It is a beautiful building that hosts a lot of festivals. One of the most popular festivals at the temple hosts thousands of people during the summertime, not only from my community or the West Island but from all across Canada and even from other countries. That is how important this temple is.

Today, people in the community are waiting to welcome a priest to the temple to continue their mission and to continue to serve the Tamil community's spiritual needs. However, the government refused the priest's first application submission, and they are still waiting for an answer on the second application.

Yes, I do recognize that people can come to Canada, work on a temporary basis, and serve a real need in a community. I know that well. Therefore, I continue to ask the minister, and other ministers involved in this file, to answer the community's request. This job cannot be fulfilled by anyone in Canada. The community needs someone with specific knowledge to help it continue to grow on a spiritual level.

[Translation]

That being said, just because we need temporary foreign workers does not mean that the program should continue to go on the way it is. As I said earlier, there are serious problems with the program. As the critic for citizenship and immigration, I would like to talk about this issue from a perspective that may be a little different than what we have heard so far in this debate.

In fact, I would like to talk about a study conducted by Ms. Bloemraad from the University of California, who looked at the success Canada has experienced with its immigration system and its pluralistic approach. Ms. Bloemraad is an immigration expert who has studied Canada's immigration system and its success at length. As this researcher said, compared to a number of European countries and our neighbour, the United States, Canada's immigration programs have been very successful because new immigrants to the country integrate and contribute fully to the economy. In general, Canadians see immigration as a very positive way to build Canada, which is not always the case in other countries.

Why is Canada so successful? The researcher mentions several factors. I do not have time to get into all of them, but one of the things she mentions is this:

*Business of Supply*

• (1640)

[English]

The focus on permanent, rather than temporary, migration has also been critical, since it gives both immigrants and the receiving society a stake in promoting favorable long-term outcomes. Supportive institutions and policies are thus an important part of the story.

[Translation]

In summary, she says that it is very important to give immigrants the opportunity to come in as permanent residents, or to ensure they know, once they are here as temporary workers, that they have the opportunity to become permanent residents and, eventually, Canadian citizens. This is important in the way that Canadians view immigrants, and it motivates newcomers to get involved and become invested in the communities that welcome them. For us here in Canada, this is an important factor in the success of our immigration system.

Historically, Canada has taken in relatively few temporary foreign workers, accepting many more skilled workers in the economic class; these workers came to the country to meet a labour need but were able to settle here. We found that an impressive number of those people applied for citizenship, as compared to the situation in many other countries; they also became involved politically. We have seen their children and their children's children achieve enormous success academically and economically. Why? Because these newcomers were welcomed by Canadian society. They saw a future in Canada and they wanted to become involved in building the wonderful country that is Canada.

However, in recent years, we have unfortunately seen a turnaround in these immigration policies, specifically under the Conservatives. What we found, actually, is that the percentage of temporary foreign workers has soared. I have some figures here. From 2002 to 2012, the number of temporary foreign workers in Canada has more than tripled. In fact, we now accept many more temporary foreign workers than economic class immigrants as permanent residents. So we can see a change in Canada's policy and we have reason to fear the impact on Canada's success in the economic integration of immigrants.

Now, if the number of temporary foreign immigrants has risen so much over these many years, we may well wonder whether there was such a significant increase in the number of jobs that Canadians can no longer fill them. If we had seen that for a year or two, followed by a decline, that might have been another thing. However, that is not the case. What we are actually seeing is an alternative solution to welcoming economic class immigrants on a permanent basis, and that is to give out visas. It is difficult to say why. However, it is certainly not an appealing solution. Ms. Bloemraad's research into the matter at the University of California gives us a good deal of very interesting food for thought.

With that, I look forward to questions from my colleagues.

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the member was completely wrong about the last point she made in her speech.

She presented a myth, a falsehood that we bring in more temporary foreign workers than permanent residents. That is the

opposite of the truth. Every year, we bring in about 260,000 new permanent residents. Permanent residents are people who can eventually become citizens. On average, we bring in about 200,000 temporary foreign workers. That number is much lower than the number of permanent residents.

I see this all the time. The left would have us believe that the Conservative government has slashed the number of permanent residents in its immigration program and replaced them with temporary residents. That is not true. It is the opposite of true. I would like the member to set the record straight. She has to acknowledge that most temporary foreign workers by far are here for a few months, that many of them are from developed nations and that they are not seeking permanent residency in Canada.

• (1645)

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with some of the things my colleague said. It is true that not all temporary foreign workers want to become permanent residents. I agree with that. However, the important thing is to offer it to those who want it so that they, in turn, can invest themselves in Canadian society.

As for the numbers, that is strange, because the researcher I quoted earlier said this:

[English]

...the recent ballooning of temporary visas heralds a new and alarming trend that could upset the pro-immigrant consensus in Canada.

[Translation]

She then provides some numbers. In 2001, 186,788 people held temporary work permits in Canada; by 2010 this number stood at 432,682. That is a significant increase.

Did I say that there are more temporary foreign workers than permanent residents? No, that is not what I meant to say. What I said was that there is a difference between the number of new economic workers and the number of new temporary foreign workers.

There are other permanent residents who are sponsored as spouses, parents or children. However, when it comes to meeting Canada's economic needs, we can see that temporary foreign workers are being given priority more and more often.

Is that really the solution we are looking for? Is that really the path that Canada wants to go down? I would say no, and I am not the only one.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, out of concern, based on discussions or comments both from the Minister of Employment and Social Development and others, including some of the New Democratic members of Parliament, with regard to the agricultural industry, I am wondering if the NDP would be open to a friendly amendment that would make it explicitly clear that temporary foreign workers in the agricultural industry would not be affected by the motion that it is putting forward today. Given what has taken place and how the government seems to be so sure, would New Democrats support a friendly amendment that would make it crystal clear?

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his proposal. It would certainly be interesting to look at, considering that our critic, who sponsored today's opposition motion, said that agricultural workers were not targeted because they are in a different category than temporary foreign workers. It is something to look at more closely. We need to make sure that it is clear.

It is important that we keep certain numbers in mind. This program needs to undergo fundamental change. That is exactly what the motion aims to do.

The Auditor General spoke about these problems in 2009. Since then, the Conservatives have told us that they are fixing the problems, but we are still talking about the scandal today. We therefore cannot trust the Conservatives when they tell us not to worry because they have hastily thrown something together to address the issue. They have been saying that for years and we can see that it is not working.

[English]

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak to this motion on behalf of the Liberal Party.

I would like to deal with the question of this huge mess that has been created in the area of temporary foreign workers: first, how we got into this mess, what the Conservative government did to make the number of temporary foreign workers double; second, why this doubling is a bad thing.

I will talk about why it is bad. It is because it changes our fundamental concept of immigration away from being a country of citizen immigrants and toward being a country of temporary worker immigrants, which Canadians do not want. Second, it is wrong because it costs Canadians jobs. Third, it is wrong because it leads to some exploitation of these temporary foreign workers.

Before I get onto those core points as to why it is damaging, let us just ask this question. How come, over the period of the current government, we got up to 214,000 temporary foreign workers entering the country in 2012 and a stock of some 335,000 such workers in this country in the most recent year? That is a doubling from before. The Conservatives keep talking about tightening, but before they tightened they had to loosen or we would not have doubled those numbers. The government does not let us in on all its secrets of exactly how it loosened, but it had to have loosened up the system or we would not have doubled that number.

We have at least three points coming from the minister's speech.

First, he talked about how we are so strict on wages that now we go by the median wage. However, we all know that not so long ago temporary foreign workers could have below average wages. Initially, some time ago, the Conservatives loosened by allowing workers to come in at below Canadian wages and now they take pride in tightening, bringing it back to the median. One of the reasons why more came here in the first place was because employers were, according to the law, allowed to pay lower wages.

The second point the minister made is that employers were now annoyed because they no longer had access to this accelerated labour market opinion, implying there used to be just that, an accelerated labour market opinion. Until recently, when the Conservatives began their tightening, they had loosened to allow these accelerated labour market opinions which meant that employers had access to a quick and easy way to import these temporary foreign workers.

The third point I would make has to do with the attitude of the government. We all know that famous quote from the president of McDonald's, that the minister gets it, and that might have been the straw that broke the camel's back that caused him to bring in this moratorium. However, clearly what the president of McDonald's had in mind was that the minister was onside with the corporate rationale for bringing in all these temporary foreign workers at the expense of Canadians. Whatever was going through the minister's mind, the members of the corporate sector at least had the impression that he was okay with it. Certainly, he had been the minister for many years and he had seen this explosion of temporary foreign workers over the years, and until very recently he did not appear to have done anything to stop it.

We do not have a full explanation because the Conservatives do not give us the information. However, we certainly know that awhile ago they had some accelerated process to get a labour market opinion that was favourable. They allowed workers in at lower wages, and the government, through the minister, certainly gave the impression to members of corporate Canada that they could go gung-ho to bring in all these temporary foreign workers.

Now that the crisis has hit them, they are being virtuous and tightening up the things that they have already loosened. However, if they are trying to explain why we doubled those numbers and why we got to where we are, we have to look at those loosening measures that they took over a number of years, because do not forget that this explosion of temporary foreign workers has occurred not just in recent months or years, but over the last seven or eight years when the current government has been in office. That is how, technically, they loosened to the point that this explosive growth in temporary foreign workers occurred.

• (1650)

Why is that explosive growth in temporary foreign workers damaging to the Canadian economy? Here I want to go through the three points I mentioned. First of all, I think the vast majority of Canadians, and certainly we in the Liberal Party, are very attached to a nation-building view of immigration where immigrants come in permanently with their families, get a job, have children, ultimately become citizens, and become Canadians like all of us. That is how this country has treated immigration for decades. I hope that is how we will always treat immigration.

The other way to do it is like in some European countries where they bring in temporary guest workers. They are not citizens, they are in brought in to do a specific job maybe for a year or maybe for two years, they come in and they are shipped out.

*Business of Supply*

The minister a few minutes ago said they were not shifting away from permanent immigration to temporary foreign workers. In a sense he is right because the number of permanent residents who came in was 265,000, but the number of temporary foreign workers was 214,000. Temporary foreign workers are 75% of the permanent immigrants. If we went back eight years that would not be 75%, it would be maybe 30%. We have certainly had an explosive growth of temporary foreign worker intake, relatively stable permanent immigration so that the temporary foreign workers as a per cent of the permanent immigrants has been escalating sharply under the government's watch.

We object to that because we think that is changing the fundamental nature of this country's immigration under the Conservatives' watch in a way that is gradual and subtle enough that not many Canadians will notice. While it is true that some of these temporary foreign workers are offered a pathway to citizenship or permanent residence as the minister stated, the proportion is not very big or else we would have seen the immigration numbers go up as well as the number of temporary foreign workers go up. We have not. We have seen an explosion of temporary foreign workers' stability in permanent immigration.

Let me make a caveat. We are not opposed to temporary foreign workers. We are in favour of temporary foreign workers in those sectors, in those parts of the country where employers, after searching diligently and paying decent wages, cannot find Canadians to do the job. For example, one person in my constituency runs restaurants with specialized food and employs Canadians, but he can only find people outside of the country who can cook this specialized food. We think he should be able to bring those people in and that will allow his restaurants, which are otherwise staffed by Canadians, to function. If they are not allowed in, which they may not be under the government's moratorium, then the restaurants might have to shut down and that would be most unfortunate. We favour a limited number of temporary foreign workers, but not the explosion that the minister has produced.

The first problem is distorting the nature of our immigration and the second problem is jobs for Canadians. I hardly have to even mention this because we have seen it so much on television, from a bank, to a restaurant, to the C.D. Howe Institute which is hardly run by a horde of socialists, their studies show that this has had a substantial positive impact on Canadian unemployment. The minister again talks out of both sides of his mouth because in one breath he says the median wage is very high, they have to come in at the median wage and in the next breath he is lecturing the private sector to pay higher wages. He cannot have it both ways. Wages have been quite stagnant in this country and part of that has been due to this explosion of temporary foreign workers.

C.D. Howe and others have shown that this has had a negative effect on Canadians getting jobs, so that is not how the system is supposed to work. When Canadians see these extreme stories of Canadians who have worked for a restaurant for 20-plus years having to train temporary foreign workers who will then take their own jobs against their will, that resonates with Canadians. It is clearly wrong, but it is something that the government has been allowing to happen with a wink and a nod, if not with open approval.

• (1655)

The third part of the issue is that there has been some exploitation of temporary foreign workers that has been reported in the media. I am not sure of the amount, but certainly there are stories of some restaurants—for example, McDonald's—that apparently require foreign workers to sleep in company houses and accept reduced wages. I am not sure of the truth of that, but certainly there are those allegations.

To recapitulate, the government has deliberately, through a policy of easing—only recently followed by tightening—permitted an explosion of temporary foreign workers. This has had negative effects for Canada: one, it has distorted our immigration away from permanent immigrants toward temporary workers; two, it has created employment problems for Canadians; and three, it has led to a certain amount of exploitation.

I have tried to establish the mechanisms through which the government has permitted the explosion to occur and why it is bad. My next question is what we should do about it. Now that we have arrived at this sorry state and the country is an uproar about it, what should we do?

The government has eased up continuously, for many years, so that over many years this growth has occurred. Only recently, under pressure, has it suddenly pretended to, or tried to, tighten up. However, one cannot fix overnight a problem that has been festering and growing for at least five years. One cannot suddenly send these people home. They have children; they have lives; and that is certainly not what we are proposing to do.

If the government had dealt with the problem surgically over the years to prevent the explosion from happening in the first place, it would not be in the sad state of affairs it finds itself in today. Not acting properly for years, it has been forced to act bluntly now, and it has used a sledgehammer approach to declare a moratorium on the whole food services sector, which is a desperate, extreme move. It will definitely hurt some of the bad people, but it will also hurt a large number of good people who will be caught in the crossfire by the government's move, which represents a desperate attempt to save itself when it has gotten itself into this huge Conservative mess. The fact that it has come to this after years of neglect, years of encouragement of inappropriate growth, is sad, but now it is here. That is what it has done, and there will undoubtedly be substantial collateral damage as a consequence of the government's action.

This is what we in the Liberal Party want the government to do. First, we have asked for the Auditor General to investigate. If ever there was a program needing investigation by the Auditor General, this is a prime candidate, because we know from what we hear in the media that there have been abuses. No one denies that. The McDonald's story and others show there have clearly been abuses. Why did these abuses occur? How widespread have they been? What were the mechanisms involved that allowed the explosion of the numbers of temporary foreign workers? This is perfect fodder for an auditor general. It would be good for all Canadians to know how this disaster happened, and the Auditor General is the best person to find out.



*Business of Supply*

I am not saying this just because we want to punish the government with a bad report from the Auditor General. We would not mind that, but that is not the main purpose. The main purpose is that the Auditor General might give us a compass for where to go in the future, because in order to know where to go in the future, it is best to understand where one has been in the past and the present. We do not have very good information on the past and the present because the government will not give it to us; so if we get the Auditor General in, without any limitations on his scope for action, we will get an unbiased, clear, fulsome report of where we stand today, and knowing where we stand today will help us very much to devise a plan for where we go tomorrow.

• (1700)

Where do we in the Liberal Party want to go in the medium term? It is hard to say precisely, when we are in the middle of a storm and we are in the middle of a crisis of the Conservatives' creation. We cannot suddenly solve a problem overnight that has taken five to ten years to develop.

In the longer run, however, the steady state, what we would want is a system in which the vast majority of Canadians coming to this country are on the track to permanent residence and citizenship, rather than in the temporary foreign worker program. We would also want a situation where the temporary foreign workers do not come at the expense of the jobs of Canadians.

At the same time, if those two conditions could be fulfilled so that the vast majority of our immigrants would be coming permanently and we would have job opportunities for Canadians, of course we would recognize that in the agricultural and specialized sectors—like academia, as the minister said—and many other areas, temporary foreign workers are a good thing. We are not opposed to that in principle, and we know that some sectors depend intimately on them. What we are opposed to is the abuse and the escalating growth that the government has permitted, which has led to all of the problems I have described.

Finally, I know the Conservative government. It loves to blame everything on the Liberal Party, even when it makes no sense. I will give two examples and then I will sit down.

I produced a report showing the explosion of processing times for every category of immigrant, citizen, and visitor from 2007 to 2012. It had gone up everywhere. Let me remind members that 2007 was a year of Conservative government, as was each and every year since until 2012. I was talking about 2007 to 2012 and what had happened then. What was the response of the government to this report? It was all the fault of the Liberals. That is a miraculous fault. I do not understand how it could have been our fault when it was all under the Conservatives' watch.

It is the same argument that this minister is using today with regard to the temporary foreign worker fiasco. It is all the fault of the Liberals, because we brought in this lower-skilled program back in 2002.

Let me give the House two numbers. In 2005, the last year of the Liberal government, there were 4,307 temporary foreign workers in the lower-skilled program. In 2012, the most recent year for which we have data, there were 30,267. I suppose it is all the fault of the

Liberals that the number grew from 4,000 to 30,000 over all these years under the Conservatives' watch. It is all our fault that the number of lower-skilled temporary workers multiplied by seven under the Conservatives' time in power, just as it is the fault of the Liberals that the processing time for immigrants has gone up 1500% or more under the watch of the Conservatives. It seems to be in their DNA, even though it makes zero sense.

Let me repeat what I said at the beginning. Not only is this a huge mess that has taken years to get into and will take years to get out of, but it is a Conservative mess. It is a mess that belongs to nobody else. I believe that Canadians do not have confidence that the Conservatives will be able to fix this mess, which they took oh so many years to create. Sadly, for a little while longer, it is a Conservative government, so we have to look to it for leadership in the solution to the mess it created.

My first recommendation to the government would be, as my colleague said in question period, to request the Auditor General to do an immediate and urgent review of this whole program, so we can get some impression of where we stand. From that, we might get some idea of how we might go forward.

• (1705)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I must admit my disappointment. I know the member for Markham—Unionville is a very intelligent man. He is an economist.

By the way, if I am not mistaken, he was an economist at RBC, at which he was just pointing fingers. Am I right about that? Was it the RBC, member?

• (1710)

**Hon. John McCallum:** It was, indeed, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jason Kenney:** All right.

Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed because, normally, he does his research accurately, as a good academic, and he did not today. He was cutting some corners.

For example, he ascribed the increase in the flow of foreign workers to Canada as being primarily because of loosening of the rules around the wage flexibility and the accelerated labour market opinion.

I am sorry. Here is a news flash. Both of those policies were introduced in April 2012, and both of them were shut down 12 months later, when we saw that it was leading to unintended consequences. Therefore, for only one year were those policies in effect. Only 5% of employers used the wage flexibility.

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By the way, the reason we brought it in was that we were getting criticism from the opposition that some temporary foreign workers were getting paid more than Canadians, because the prevailing regional wage rate established by Service Canada is a median, which is more than the usual starting wage rate. Therefore, we were trying to reflect the fact that there is some need for some flexibility in the wage rates, but since no employers were using it, we thought it might be subject to abuse. We shut it down in only 12 months.

To what, then, can we attribute the growth?

By the way, let us get the numbers clear. In 2006, 138,500 temporary foreign workers entered Canada. It is going to be under 200,000 for 2013, when the data come out. So, there has been a growth of about 70,000 people. We have gone from the temporary foreign worker program flow representing about 0.7% of the Canadian workforce to representing about 1.1% of the Canadian workforce. That is not an increase by orders of magnitude. It is an increase of about 70,000 people. It is true that a portion, 20,000, of that came in the low-skill stream, but the rest were high skilled. That is the point.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We only have a few minutes left, so I do want the member for Markham—Unionville to have his opportunity to respond.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his reference to the Royal Bank. These days, I love all the banks the same, and the insurance companies.

I guess my answer to the minister is that the onus is on him. In order to have had this huge growth, they have to have loosened somehow. If my theories as to what were the loosening elements might not be totally accurate, the onus is on him to tell us what it was that made that growth so high. The only reason we do not know is the secretiveness of the government.

So, if he could elucidate on that and clarify why this exponential growth took place in the first place, I am sure all Canadians would be grateful.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have time for one more short question.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood, ask a short question, please.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during question period, the minister had great fun saying that various members of the opposition, particularly the member for Papineau, had submitted requests under this particular piece of legislation. It struck me, and I wondered whether it strikes the hon. member, that possibly there are so many members from both the opposition and the government side coming to the minister about specific issues due to the fact that this program is actually in such a mess that individual members have to intervene on behalf of constituents to straighten out the messes created by the minister in the first place.

That is question one.

Question two has to do with the fact that some financial institutions have been using this program in a way that no one, and I cannot even imagine the minister, would have contemplated;

namely, using Canadians to train temporary foreign workers so that the Canadians, at the end of the training, no longer have jobs.

Now—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. member for Markham—Unionville has one minute, maximum, to respond.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, on the first point, it is a little like immigration. I think the hon. member knows, as I do, that if anything, the number of people coming to us with problems on immigration has increased exponentially, partly because Conservative MPs do not do much on that topic, so we get people from their ridings as well. For whatever reason, the numbers and the burden have increased. Does that mean the immigration system is in a mess? Maybe it does.

The point I would make is that a member of Parliament of any party has a responsibility to pursue the needs of his or her constituents. Just because I were to ask the minister about a temporary foreign worker, representing my constituents, does not mean that I necessarily favour the program and it should not provide the government with ammunition to try to shoot us down. We are simply doing our job representing our constituents, and it is a phony bit of ammunition to use, as if it does not have any other arguments, to try to shoot us down when we raise legitimate points on the temporary foreign worker program.

● (1715)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

[Translation]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP would like the division to be deferred until tomorrow, Wednesday, April 30, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The division on the motion stands deferred until Wednesday, April 30, at the end of government orders.

**Hon. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### NATIONAL LYME DISEASE STRATEGY ACT

The House resumed from March 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-442, An Act respecting a National Lyme Disease Strategy, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-442, An Act respecting a National Lyme Disease Strategy, which has been tabled by my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands and seconded by my colleague from Vancouver East.

It is worthwhile noting that the House has looked at the question of Lyme disease in incremental steps since at least 2008. At that time, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, who is a former member of Parliament from Winnipeg North, called for a national strategy and by 2009 she was submitting order paper questions to find out more from the government about what it was doing, or perhaps better put, not doing.

As the successor to Jack Layton in Toronto—Danforth, it was of some interest to have discovered in correspondence provided to me by a constituent that on January 17, 2008, Mr. Layton had written to the Conservative minister of health at the time outlining the life circumstances of David Leggett, one of my constituents, who I rely on heavily in terms of his counsel on this issue.

To cut a long story short, Mr. Layton indicated to the minister that he had issued an information request under the Access to Information Act requesting results on the proficiency tests of a federal laboratory with respect to the ability to identify Lyme indicators in blood. The whole point was that the ability to do so was the key to early detection and therefore to effective treatment. There is this wonderful line in the letter, "The request for information was denied on the basis of national security. Neither Mr. Leggett nor I can understand the basis for this response".

Although I am not here to explain or to talk further about why such a bizarre response to an information request on Lyme disease would have been received, it is rather indicative of the climate that patients, advocates and supporters have faced for a good number of years. There seems to be this bunker mentality in various quarters, and maybe as far back as 2008, that was shared by the Conservative government. I realize that things are moving ahead and that the Public Health Agency of Canada can be counted on more as an ally in this struggle. I hope that will lead to all members of the House supporting the bill from my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Time is marching on. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States has upped its estimate using a whole set of methods to approximately 300,000 Americans a year being diagnosed with Lyme disease. This is a 2013 analysis. From that,

### Private Members' Business

apart from the high incidence, it concludes that the CDC and other researchers must continue to identify novel methods to kill ticks and prevent illness in people. Lyle Petersen of the CDC said, "We need to move to a broader approach to tick reduction, involving entire communities, to combat this public health problem". That is all well and good.

It is important to note the preventative angle. However, it is also, through my interactions with constituents, the whole question of diagnosis. Once people are unlucky enough to get infected, early diagnosis leads to them, potentially so early, to actually being able to prevent any effects, but within a short period of time that will be impossible. Therefore, to receive effective treatment has to be as much at the top of our agenda as the broader prevention.

It is also the case from recent research that it is very clear that the relevant ticks are moving north and that at some point in the next number of years the large majority of Canadians will live in high incidence zones. As I said, time is marching on.

My colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands has devised something that is very much of a process, a process that will achieve something.

● (1720)

The first, or the central, pillar of the bill is the convening of a conference with all stakeholders within six months of the bill receiving royal assent to come up with a series of strategic outcomes, including, for example, establishing guidelines for prevention, diagnostics and treatment.

What I like in particular, and what I know people in the anti-Lyme disease advocacy community like most, about the strategy is how it makes sure to include the representatives of patient groups along with other experts in the medical community. From experience grows experience. I can attest to that in many conversations with David Leggett. From experience, he has insights that almost no member of the medical profession could hope to bring to the table.

I would like to share the stories of two of my constituents by way of bringing that home.

Alison says:

I am one of your constituents, living in the Danforth area, who has been battling Lyme for the last 7.5 years.

It took 5 years to receive a diagnosis, and now over 2 years of treatment to become more functionally stable. In 2011, I had to make the decision to go into massive medical debt in order to receive treatment - my Lyme literate doctor is located in New York.

I lost the ability to work 4 years ago. And, at this point, I'm quite scared about my future. I'm only 38, I've watched my 30s just rush by. I know that if I had received an earlier diagnosis, I wouldn't have had to experience such difficulty recovering.

I really don't want this to happen to any other Canadian. Lyme or no Lyme, all of us deserve medical care in our own country, and we deserve proper diagnostic tests and treatment. The current treatment guidelines for Lyme Disease in Canada, set by the College of Physicians, is an absolute joke. 30-days of antibiotic therapy is woefully inadequate: especially if a patient has been exposed to the Lyme bacteria for years. Personally, I didn't experience any noticeable, long-lasting symptom improvement until 13-months into antibiotic treatment.....

I recently calculated how much money I've had to spend on medical care in the last 7-years, and the total came to approximately \$42,000. .... I want all MPs to know how incredibly expensive it is for Canadian Lyme patients to receive treatment. It never ceases to surprise me that I pay into a universal medical system (through taxes) that I have no access to. How crazy is that?

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Donna also writes:

I am a Toronto-Danforth resident who knows only too well of the devastating (physically, emotionally and financially) impacts that Lyme disease has on a person. I am also proof that there is a need for proper diagnosis and that extended treatment can be effective. I lost 5+ years of my life, and approximately \$250,000 to the disease. I am (mostly) well again and have been very fortunate to have completed a successful return to work.

With respect to my (conservative) estimate of the cost, I don't want to mislead you...I was treated in the U.S., but those costs were only a small part of the actual costs.

I would end now by drawing on my constituent David Leggett whose insights I always welcome. He does say that when it comes to a strategy, something the NDP always emphasizes within the framework of collaborative federalism. In a recent note to me, he said:

Something to stress is the importance of working in lockstep with provincial government health ministries. To be truly effective, a national framework based on objective discovery, research, effective testing tools...training for doctors...and effective treatment regimes and timelines have to be set up and maintained.

Also, he says, echoing the other two constituents I just quoted:

—the fact that many lymies have had to rely on US laboratories and doctors for proper diagnosis and treatment. Without this support from beyond our borders (and mostly paid for out of pocket), the problem here would be borderline catastrophic.

The tabling of this bill is timely. It is needed. I congratulate and thank my colleague, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, for doing so. I fully intend to support it. I hope the strategy that does emerge from this, because I do have great hope that colleagues from across the way will also support it, will in fact make a big difference in what is likely to be a growing health issue for Canada in the years ahead.

• (1725)

**Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my thoughts on Bill C-442. The subject is a national Lyme disease strategy.

I am very pleased to second the adoption of this bill by Parliament to address the urgent needs of victims of this disease. I congratulate the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for this initiative. I totally support the important principle of this bill and our government's efforts to amend the legislation at the health committee, of which I am a member.

As my colleagues on both sides of the House have recognized, Lyme disease is an emerging infectious disease in Canada. It is caused by a bacterium transmitted by ticks, now increasingly found in southern Canada, including in the greater Toronto area.

Like the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, I have a friend who suffers from Lyme disease. In 2006, I received a call from my long-time friend, Janet Mitchell, a former Oakville town councillor, who had recently, after years of confusion and misdiagnosis, been diagnosed with Lyme disease.

Janet told me a hair-raising story. She had in previous years lost the feeling in and control of her lower extremities and had difficulty walking. She was naturally deeply engaged with and worried about what was happening. She had great trouble getting up and down steps and ended up using a walker to get around. She and her husband had to move to a condominium that had no steps. She had a

fear that she would end up needing a wheelchair due to a disease that she had previously never even heard of.

Then Janet told me that she had heard that her condition could have come from the bite of an insect, which is very frightening. A deer tick had bitten Janet, and unlike most victims of such bites, she did not develop a visible target-like rash, so she had never noticed. This is not that rare. That tick had deposited a kind of poison in her bloodstream, bacteria that over time can hide in the human body and cause those symptoms. It finds places in our joints and elsewhere where antibiotics cannot easily reach. It is like a scary movie.

Reported Lyme disease cases in Canada increased from 30 in 2003 to over 300 in 2012, and these numbers are expected to rise even further as ticks responsible for Lyme disease move into Canada's most densely populated areas. These numbers will also rise as conditions thought to be something else or diagnosed to be something else are increasingly correctly diagnosed as Lyme disease. Indeed, based on current rates in the U.S., Canada is likely to experience a marked increase in Lyme disease cases in the coming 10 years. Some estimates report that by 2020, the economic cost of reported Lyme disease cases in Canada could reach \$8 million annually, for cases diagnosed early, in medical costs alone.

Being from Oakville, in southern Ontario, I understand that it is my part of the country that will most likely see the sharpest spike in Lyme disease cases over the next decade. That is why it is so important to my constituents that we address this issue sooner rather than later, and it is why I thank Janet Mitchell for educating me about this nasty and insidious disease.

These unsettling statistics are some of the chief reasons I am supportive of this legislation before the House today and why I have also been pleased to hear of our government's work in addressing Lyme disease. In recent years, our government has committed to working with the provinces and territories to address these risks to Canadians. The Public Health Agency of Canada has undertaken enhanced stakeholder engagement, public and clinical education, enhanced surveillance, and research to improve diagnostic integrity, which is one of the key problems.

The Public Health Agency's work has focused on surveillance, prevention, and control as the first step. The second step is research and diagnosis, and the third step is engagement, education, and awareness. This work has demonstrated positive first steps to address an emerging yet serious disease, and Bill C-442 promises to further add to this drive. Additionally, our government has devoted funding dollars in support of Lyme disease research, primarily through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Indeed, since 2006, we have invested approximately \$4.6 million in Lyme disease research.

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Our government has also been diligently working in concert with the provinces and territories on surveillance and on prevention and control activities. Provinces and territories report Lyme disease as a national reportable disease, and these data are contributing to the Public Health Agency of Canada's ability to monitor and report on the disease's progress.

• (1730)

Of course, the reality is why I am supportive of our government's proposed amendments to the bill, as outlined in the above facts.

Janet Mitchell was originally told by her doctor that she had MS, a disease that is somewhat more common in Canada than in other countries. She was told, like many others across Canada, that she could not possibly have Lyme disease, because we do not have Lyme disease in Canada. That was the best diagnosis she could get at the time. I shudder to think of how frightening that false diagnosis would have been for her and other Canadians who may have been diagnosed in a similar way.

However, Janet studied her condition on her own. She had spent a lot of time camping and hiking. Absent a visible rash, she had all the described symptoms of Lyme disease she found on the Internet. Janet found a new doctor, who advised her that the only test done in Ontario was not that reliable. She paid to have her own blood sample sent to the U.S. for a test called IGeneX, otherwise referred to as Western Blot, which is far more reliable. That test told her that she had the Lyme spirochete in her bloodstream. She had Lyme disease.

The theory that we do not have Lyme disease in Canada was actually never really true. We just did not have very much of it. Yet our specialists misdiagnosed many Canadians with Lyme disease as having other conditions, preventing them from getting the treatment they needed, as if deer and birds do not cross international borders, because both carry the ticks.

If caught early, Lyme disease can be cured. The bacteria can be eliminated with common antibiotics like erythromycin. However, once the spirochetes invade the cells, it is difficult to kill them, requiring, in some cases, months of treatment with more powerful antibiotics. An early and accurate diagnosis is key.

It is clearly important to respond to emerging diseases such as Lyme, but as the federal government, we still maintain the responsibility to respect jurisdictional boundaries, especially with regard to health care.

I have been very pleased to see that our government has been delivering historic funding dollars in support of health care to be delivered by the provinces and territories. They are projected to reach \$40 billion annually by the end of the decade, which is, of course, a new record.

Provinces and territories are responsible for health care delivery, and it is important that the bill reflect that reality. At the federal level, we do our part by supporting research and sharing best practices across jurisdictions. Indeed, we are the single largest investor in health research, with support of nearly \$1 billion annually. These research dollars will deliver the resources necessary to support medical experts in developing the research necessary to adequately respond to new and emerging diseases.

As I mentioned earlier, I am a member of the Standing Committee on Health and very much look forward to further review of Bill C-442 when it is referred to us in the coming months.

In the course of the committee's work, I hope to hear from various stakeholder groups on the current and possible future impacts of Lyme disease, not the least of which will be medical experts on the subject. Their input will help contribute to the committee's understanding of this emerging disease and further inform our work going forward.

I would be pleased to work with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands on the bill, which promises to further build upon the good work our government has been doing to address Lyme disease in Canada. I think her commitment to this evolving issue and her willingness to work with our government demonstrates a spirit of co-operation that will be important going forward.

As we look to proceed on the bill at its current stage, I anticipate a good and full discussion on its merits and on ways it can be further improved.

I thank my hon. colleagues from all parties for their attention, and I urge them to support Bill C-442 at this stage so that we may work to improve its recognition of jurisdictional responsibilities and the proper role the federal government plays in addressing emerging diseases.

I look forward to the health committee's proceedings on the bill and the testimony we will hear on the subject of Lyme disease.

• (1735)

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to rise in this House today to speak to Bill C-442, because like many other members in this House, I have constituents who have suffered from Lyme disease. Sadly, for many constituents, it has taken them months if not years to get an adequate diagnosis. In the meantime, their lives have been lives of misery, as they simply have not been correctly diagnosed or have not received the proper treatment.

Bill C-442 aims to track the incidence rates, create educational materials to raise awareness about Lyme disease, establish testing and treatment guidelines, and track the related economic impacts of Lyme disease. It would also support the research and implementation of better and more reliable diagnostic testing and increased education and awareness among physicians.

I want to turn for a moment to a *Globe and Mail* article that was in the paper on April 27. The headline was “Lyme disease on the rise in Canada, linked to ticks”. The subheading is, “This is the first in a series examining health repercussions for Canadians due to a changing climate. First up: Lyme disease”. In the article, the writer notes:

Most Canadians think of Lyme disease as a rare illness that afflicts hikers bitten by ticks in the deep woods. Infected individuals develop a bull's-eye rash and go on antibiotics for a few weeks to clear it up. Problem solved.

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The trouble with this picture—promoted for years by Canadian health authorities—is that it does not begin to capture the true threat of Lyme disease, which in its chronic form can turn into a life sentence of debilitating joint pain and neurological problems. Disease-carrying ticks in Canada have increased tenfold in the past two decades, spread by migratory birds and nurtured by warming climates that allow them to thrive in our own backyards. While reported cases jumped 146 per cent between 2009 and 2012, advocates say that testing is inadequate and doctors lack awareness of Lyme, resulting in gross underreporting and under-diagnosis of this rapidly emerging infectious disease.

I can certainly say that on Vancouver Island, some of the response from the medical community has been that Lyme disease does not exist on Vancouver Island, so someone could not possibly have Lyme disease. Of course, when some of the constituents were able to get the testing, outside of Canada, sadly, spending thousands of dollars, it was demonstrated that they did in fact have Lyme disease and then needed to be on prolonged courses of antibiotics to deal with it.

Later in the article, it says:

Detecting Lyme disease is an evolving science, however. Recent studies have shown that different strains of *Borrelia*, the bacteria that causes Lyme, may target different organ systems, triggering a variety of immune responses. While the responses vary, one strain alone can affect skin, joints, the heart and nervous system.

Canadian health authorities recognize the need to detect different strains of the bacteria, the PHAC [the Public Health Agency of Canada] said in a statement, adding that Canadian labs are using “updated screening tests that are reactive to a much broader range of *Borrelia* strains”.

Mr. Wilson is with a not-for-profit organization that has been trying to raise awareness. The article continues:

But Wilson said that from what he has heard in the Lyme community, Canadian patients are still being offered the same old tests. The standard Western blot test detects only a lab strain of *Borrelia* and its close cousin.

The second test, known as the ELISA, isn't sensitive enough to distinguish Lyme from such illnesses as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis, according to Dr. Brian Fallon, director of the Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases Research Center at Columbia University.

Both are known to have “significant limitations,” Fallon said.

Newer tests available at private U.S. labs can detect all strains and species of *Borrelia* bacteria. Although these tests have their own pitfalls, “they’re really an improvement on the standard tests,” said Fallon, who saw no reason why they should not be widely used in Canada.

The article concluded by stating:

Unless Canada starts doing a better job at detecting Lyme disease..., “we’re going to continue to have most people in the chronic category, because they’re just not being picked up.”

This has a devastating effect. Certain people talk about the economy, but it has a devastating effect on people and their lives and on their families.

Part of the challenge with this is that, as I mentioned, in Canada, many patients report issues with the testing and treatment for Lyme disease. The different types of blood tests performed to identify Lyme disease often yield inaccurate results. This may mean that patients who in fact have Lyme disease are not diagnosed, or even more worrying, are misdiagnosed with multiple sclerosis or chronic fatigue syndrome and do not receive the appropriate treatment, exacerbating their symptoms. Some patients even have to travel to other countries to receive treatment, because it is inadequate in Canada.

● (1740)

The NDP believes that this bill would improve the treatment and outcome for Lyme disease sufferers. Canadians need a national strategy on Lyme disease to ensure that the testing and treatment options in Canada are improved. Therefore, we support this bill and believe it lays out a concise plan for educating Canadians about the disease and, more importantly, providing a better quality of life for Lyme disease sufferers.

To provide a bit of background on it, this disease is spread by tick bites. Ticks are small parasites that feed on the blood of animals and humans. They pass on Lyme disease when they feed on mice, squirrels, birds, or other animals who carry the bacterium and then bite humans.

Ticks are most common during the warmer months, from spring through to late autumn. Canadians who live in areas that have mild winter temperatures and minimal snowfall have an increased risk of coming into contact with ticks, which is a description of the climate on Vancouver Island. Climate change is one of the factors causing more regions to be at risk, with warmer weather increasing tick distribution across many parts of Canada.

I have been working on this file for a number of years. Back in 2010, I had written a letter to the then minister. We had a back and forth with a number of letters. I had written a follow-up letter asking for further clarification and action because part of the response from the government was that treatment and diagnosis is a provincial responsibility so there is really not much role for the government. I was trying to argue that of course there is a role for the federal government, and part of that role is around leadership. However, I reminded the minister that the federal government has a clear role to play in establishing the guidelines and that it is within this area that most action needs to be taken.

I went on to remind the minister that the Canada Health Act's principle of reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers is an important aspect of what Canadians expect in our publicly funded, publicly delivered health care system and that when we were seeing unequal access or seeing Canadians have to go out of the country in order to get adequate testing, that is absolutely a financial barrier.

I went on in the letter to say:

A number of studies have concluded that the tick vector is spreading rapidly in Canada, a process likely to be accelerated by climate change. Without current, up-to-date information about the geographical distribution of tick vector populations, doctors may falsely discount a possible Lyme disease diagnosis, and thus deny serological testing. In addition, the tick vector is also carried by migratory birds, and is therefore not isolated to any geographical region.

I quoted from an article published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* in 2009, entitled, “The emergence of Lyme disease in Canada”, stating:

...“effective enhanced surveillance involving federal and provincial agencies needs to be instigated and that clinician awareness of Lyme disease will be crucial in minimizing its impact”...as it is an emerging disease in Canada.

Further on I state:

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Ultimately, Canadians are receiving inadequate care or no care at all when it comes to Lyme disease, forcing them to leave the country to seek medical attention. This is a direct denial of their rights. New national guidelines must be put in place to address this serious contravention of the Canada Health Act. Canadians should have confidence in their health care system.

Based on recent studies, the current Guidelines simply do not take into account that Lyme disease is emerging in Canada and that geography cannot be relied upon to diagnose Lyme disease. In addition, the two-tiered testing is fundamentally problematic as it excludes many patients who have Lyme disease from the more sensitive...testing...

In the response from the minister of September 15, 2011, it was interesting that the she indicated this in the letter:

Climate change is anticipated to accelerate the emergence of Lyme disease in Canada. Endemic Lyme disease risk occurs in much of southern British Columbia, but the vector here is less efficient, and risk is relatively low.

Therefore, even a couple of years ago the minister is indicating at that point that the risk was relatively low. I would argue that, because the government was not doing the kind of surveillance and follow-up that was required in order to determine the real incidence, people were simply being excluded.

There have been some changes. Although the government has moved to look at making this a nationally reportable disease in Canada, many people simply do not trust those numbers. Therefore, I will certainly be supporting Bill C-442. I want to commend the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for bringing this matter forward. It is a very important matter for us in Nanaimo—Cowichan and the rest of Canada. I would encourage all members of this House to support this bill and let us get on with developing that national strategy that is so important for our constituents.

● (1745)

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to join in the debate on Bill C-442, an act respecting a national Lyme disease strategy. I commend my friend, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for bringing forward this important bill that proposes the development of a national strategy in response to a growing issue of national concern.

I cannot overly stress how important this debate is, as well as its personal significance for me. As some members of this place may recall, a few years ago my daughter became ill. She had unexplained pains and symptoms of the kind and character that have been described by other members in the House in this debate that led her from doctor to doctor and diagnosis to diagnosis without any relief in sight.

It was a stressful and traumatic time for our entire family, a period and sense of both hopelessness and helplessness. Hopelessness on the one hand because it was unclear what the correct diagnosis was in the place of competing diagnoses, or the absence of any diagnosis at all, and helplessness because it was difficult to watch my daughter struggle and not be able to help in any way.

As is too often the case, one only learns the intricacies of a disease when one is confronted with it. That was my experience with Lyme. When my daughter's purported diagnosis came I read as much as I could about the disease and was shocked at the Canadian experience with the disease when compared to the American one. Indeed, at the time I learned that there was already a U.S. Congressional caucus discussing this issue, and that there had already been proposed

legislation introduced south of the border, while the debate had hardly begun in this House at all.

While many statistics have been quoted in the debate here, I would like to take a slight step back to note how Canada has been behind when it comes to Lyme disease. Here, I refer everyone to a response tabled by the government on November 15, 2011, in response to an order paper question from my colleague and friend, the member of Parliament for Etobicoke North. In that answer the government said:

[*Translation*]

The percentage of Lyme disease cases thought to be reported is unknown at present as Lyme disease has only recently become reportable.

● (1750)

[*English*]

Recall that was in 2011. Now less than three years later we know the reported cases of Lyme in Canada jumped 146% between 2009 and 2012. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, 315 cases of Lyme disease were reported in 2012. According to CanLyme President Jim Wilson, the actual number is likely to be in the thousands given the massive under-diagnosis and under-reporting of the disease. The first reported case of Lyme disease in Quebec was in 2004. It was not until 2008 that the first case was confirmed inside the province.

Referred to as the “great imitator”, Lyme poses great difficulties for medical practitioners because it presents symptoms that are quite nebulous. Indeed, symptoms include joint pain, headache, and fatigue and these can easily be mistaken, and often are, for other illnesses.

Moreover, tick bites often go unnoticed and it is therefore difficult for doctors to recognize early stage Lyme based on initial symptoms that are generally associated with more benign conditions like the flu. It can also be very difficult to diagnose Lyme in children, who may not notice or communicate that they have been bitten by a tick. Indeed, in one recent study published by the journal *Arthritis & Rheumatology*, the first such study to identify the effects of untreated Lyme infection in children, researchers found that 76% of patients did not recall even having a tick bite.

If diagnosed early and treated with antibiotics within the first six weeks of an infection, the chances are high that a Lyme disease patient can achieve a full recovery. However, if left undiagnosed, the disease can quickly escalate: patients can develop a variety of neurological symptoms and are much more likely to develop debilitating and chronic conditions including arthritis and even facial paralysis. Currently, researchers at a new Lyme disease research facility, funded in part by the non-profit organization CanLyme, are preparing to use genetic testing to determine the extent to which some chronic diseases such as multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, and Alzheimer's may in fact be the result of Lyme or other tick-borne infections.

It is clear that my background is not in medicine. Yet I understand as others in the House have said that much research remains to be done and the medical community itself is engaged in a debate over Lyme disease and its impacts over the long term.

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This is in part what makes the bill so important. It allows medical professionals to share with each other and with policy-makers across the country at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels their evidence and best practices in order to facilitate a standardized approach to diagnosing and treating this disease.

In particular, the bill would require the Minister of Health to convene a conference bringing together his or her counterparts, representatives of the medical community, patients' groups, and other stakeholders to discuss this important issue. Through collaboration with the provinces and territories and medical professionals, this bill would result in the development of a national strategy to address the challenges posed by the growing risk of exposure to Lyme disease in Canada. As has been acknowledged during previous debate on this bill, Lyme disease poses a major health problem about which Canadians are not sufficiently aware and for which we remain still ill-prepared.

Other members in this place have acknowledged the laudable intent of this bill, which the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands detailed in her remarks and has spoken to as eloquently as one could. As she explained, this is a bill that would deal with the threat of Lyme disease by creating a national surveillance system to address the problems of under-reporting and misdiagnosis, which we know can have severe consequences. It would also strive to achieve the sharing of best practices by medical professionals and ministers of health in the provinces and territories.

Before I close, I would like to draw attention to one other aspect of this national health crisis, which is the extent to which communicable diseases are inextricably intertwined with our natural environment. The recent explosion of the incidence of Lyme disease is tied to changes in climate and land use that can be difficult to track and may be overlooked by both medical practitioners and policy-makers. Indeed, the recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change specifically noted:

Substantial warming in higher-latitude regions will open up new terrain for some infectious diseases that are limited at present by low temperature boundaries, as already evidenced by the northward extensions in Canada...of tick populations...the vectors for Lyme disease...

Indeed, there are myriad unforeseeable ways that climate change and other environmental concerns may affect public health. While this example is apparent now, there will be other such occurrences and we need to make sure that we take a holistic approach to understanding and responding to these types of threats.

Public health concerns of this kind, which require collaboration and education to achieve prevention, are perfectly suited for a co-ordinated federal framework to achieve, as the bill before us expressly sets out, increased public awareness, consensus for best practices, and an up-to-date understanding of emerging evidence regarding how this disease operates.

I trust that the members in this place will join in supporting this initiative by voting for this bill, thereby sending a clear message to Canadians that we are listening to their concerns, we are seeking to do what we can, and that we will act.

In closing, may I add that the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands' initiative in this regard is already having a positive influence. Indeed, just by debating this bill in a multipartisan matter, we are raising

awareness and signalling to Canadians that this is a public health issue of national concern that deserves urgent attention and action.

I further trust that we will all join in supporting this bill so that we can take action to find the necessary solutions for the suffering of thousands of Canadians. It is a sad reality, as I indicated at the outset, that Lyme disease remains massively under-diagnosed and largely misunderstood, with the U.S. and Canadian experience differing in this regard. Cases have been skyrocketing along the U.S. side of the Vermont, New York, and Maine border with Quebec, though it should be clear that ticks do not stop at the border, as it has been said in this debate. Indeed, the prevalence of disease-carrying ticks in Canada has increased tenfold over the past two decades and there is just cause for great concern.

I am hopeful that in working together to address the situation, and with excellent bills like this going in the right direction, we will succeed in a common cause. May I conclude, again, by thanking the leader of the Green Party for this important initiative. I join again with all members in this place in expressing our sympathy and solidarity with those suffering from Lyme disease, as well as our support and appreciation to the doctors, nurses, and researchers seeking to combat Lyme disease and treat those afflicted with it.

● (1755)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak to an issue as important as Lyme disease. I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands in bringing forward this very important initiative.

This disease is spreading in Canada, and it is expected to continue to spread in years to come. That is why we have to act quickly. Bill C-442, the bill introduced by my colleague, is a step in that direction.

As was said before, Lyme disease, caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*, is transmitted through tick bites. In addition to causing serious symptoms, the disease can cause serious health consequences, affecting the joints, the heart and even the nervous system.

In Canada, ticks that can transmit Lyme disease are found in the southern parts of Manitoba, Ontario and British Columbia, as well as in some regions in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Quebec. In Quebec, ticks that carry the bacterium are found in the Montérégie region in particular.

The Bulletin québécois de vigie et d'intervention des maladies infectieuses, produced by the Bureau de surveillance et de vigie of the Direction de la protection de la santé publique, shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of Lyme disease cases in Montérégie.

In 2012, the number of cases increased considerably, going from 16 in 2007 to 43 in 2011. My riding is in that region, and I am greatly concerned by Health Canada's inaction in containing the spread of the bacterium.



Today, Mont-Saint-Bruno is a risk area, where many ticks spreading the disease can be found. We must start a national campaign to warn Canadians that these ticks exist in their region.

As early as 2008, a New Democratic member of Parliament, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, was asking the minister of health to implement a strategy to protect Canadians against an increase in the number of cases of Lyme disease. Her requests fell on deaf ears. However, five years later, we are seeing the disease progress exponentially.

At the time, the government turned a deaf ear. Now it can no longer deny the urgency of the situation. Lyme disease will continue to spread, because it goes hand in hand with global warming. Winters are not as cold as they once were, allowing the ticks to survive more easily. Inevitably, more places will become risk areas.

We must therefore be proactive in establishing a national medical surveillance program to track incidence rates, a solution proposed in Bill C-442.

Since 2009, Lyme disease has been a nationally reportable disease. That means that all medical professionals must report cases of Lyme disease to the Public Health Agency of Canada through the provincial public health system. This imperative must go hand in hand with preventive measures and programs tailored to public health needs. However, nothing specific has been done to date.

We have heard testimony from those suffering from Lyme disease who have had to deal with ignorance of the disease on the part of some doctors. The observation is alarming, but doctors are overlooking the disease because the blood tests used to diagnose it are very unreliable.

•(1800)

Existing diagnostic tests are effective when Lyme disease is spread, but not when it is in the early stages. Furthermore, people with Lyme disease are often misdiagnosed.

A number of specialists believe that the ELISA tests used in Canada are inadequate. A recent study at Johns Hopkins University, one of the most prestigious medical schools in the United States, showed that the ELISA test protocol for Lyme disease could not even detect the disease in 75% of patients. That is not right. The federal government needs to show some leadership on health care and needs to find ways to better protect Canadians' health by coming up with more effective and efficient solutions.

Canadians need a national Lyme disease strategy, which is why I strongly support Bill C-442, which was introduced by my colleague. This bill is effective. It proposes some guidelines for preventing, diagnosing, treating and managing the disease, as well as for creating and distributing educational material for health care professionals.

There is little documentation on people affected by Lyme disease, and their health care is often mismanaged. Research to improve the diagnostic process should be a priority so that we can prevent incorrect diagnoses.

Such a strategy has been needed for a long time. Canadians' health cannot take a back seat. The government needs to roll up its sleeves and work with the provinces to adopt measures to control this

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pandemic. Now is the time to take action. I fully support Bill C-442, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

•(1805)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of my House of Commons colleagues. It is a great honour for me because this bill has received support from all of the parties in the House.

[*English*]

I am quite overwhelmed with gratitude for this effort to bring forward something in a non-partisan spirit to help people across Canada who have been exposed to bacteria-bearing ticks and who have, as a result, suffered from Lyme disease. They are going to have help.

The fact I brought forward the bill in a non-partisan fashion has been received in equal measure as a non-partisan effort, as was evidenced by the speeches we heard here today and earlier. I will mention particularly the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's, himself a parliamentary secretary and part of cabinet as a result, who spoke so passionately about why we need to act on Lyme disease, and equally so the members today for Oakville, Toronto—Danforth, Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, and Nanaimo—Cowichan. I was particularly struck by the member for Mount Royal. For him the experience of Lyme disease is very personal, because his daughter was exposed to it and suffered from it.

I am probably most grateful, more than to any other individual, to someone who has not spoken to the bill. That is the hon. Minister of Health. Without her support it would be much harder to imagine that we would see the bill leave this place and go quickly to the health committee, where I hope we will have constructive amendments, which I have already discussed with the Minister of Health, to avoid any interjurisdictional problems with the provinces.

I hope to see the bill passed in the House of Commons and go directly to the Senate. Right now I think it is not a question of if the bill is passed, but when, and how quickly we can get help to the people who are suffering from Lyme disease.

My thanks go also to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and to the Canadian Medical Association for their quite clear stand in support of the bill to bring the support and the help people need at the level of prevention through greater public awareness, adequate treatment, quick diagnosis, and further research.

To have all these things happen through the sharing of best practices, we need all the players around the table: provincial, federal, and medical experts, as well as the people in the Lyme disease community themselves, who have rallied around the bill, collected thousands and thousands of names on petitions, and delivered them to their MPs.

My thanks go out to all. Let us see the bill passed, and quickly.

*Government Orders*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The question is on the motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

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

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Pursuant to order made on Monday, April 28, the House shall now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Motion No. 9 under Government Business.

Pursuant to Standing Order 100, I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 9, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members how the proceedings will unfold. Members will recall that each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

Members may share their time with another member.

The debate will end after four hours or when no member rises to speak.

● (1810)

[*English*]

Pursuant to the order adopted Monday, April 28, the Chair will receive no dilatory motions, no quorum calls, and no requests for unanimous consent.

I will remind all hon. members that, as the Standing Orders permit during take note debates, members will be recognized from the seat of their choice in the chamber.

We will now begin tonight's take note debate.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC)** moved:

That this Committee take note of the situation in the Republic of South Sudan.

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC):**

Mr. Chair, it is indeed a very important issue that has been brought forward for discussion today, the situation in South Sudan.

Before I begin, let me just give a brief breakdown on the situation in South Sudan. I was born in that part of the region, in East Africa. I am well aware of the situation when the colonial powers left Africa. The winds of change were blowing on the continent, and African countries became independent.

Before that, one of the tragedies was that during the colonial power, the boundaries that were made in that part of the world were boundaries that did not take into account many of the ethnic and tribal customs and tribes living together. The borders had been made, but at that given time, we did not have much conflict; however, as the situation arose and as the countries became independent, these tensions began, the tribal tension that has been hitting the African continent very regularly.

In the earlier years, the Organization of African Unity passed a resolution to say all borders must be recognized so that there would not be conflict. Unfortunately, that did not work.

In the case of Sudan, South Sudan was joined with Sudan, one of the largest countries in the African continent. We had upper Sudan and lower Sudan, the lower Sudan being people of black origin and the upper Sudan people of Arab nature. This led to a conflict that had been there for many, many years with thousands of people, leading to rebellion.

Canada, at that given time, played a role in the comprehensive peace plan with the world community, with the United Nation, many of which sessions I attended. We brought the parties together for a comprehensive settlement. In the process, Canada being very generous with refugee claimants from these countries, we took quite a lot of refugees who were displaced from South Sudan due to the war that was taking place between north and south.

Subsequently, with Canada also being enrolled very heavily politically in the comprehensive peace plan, providing logistic support and working with our allies—the U.S.A. and all the others—pressure was put on the north and the south to come to the table, which they did. Out of that was born a new nation in the continent of Africa called South Sudan.

I had the honour and the privilege to represent Canada at the birth of this new nation in Africa. There was a huge amount of excitement when this nation was born, including on my part. Coming from the region, I found it quite historical to see a nation being born that rightfully should have been independent. As this nation was born, with it came the issue of responsibility.

In my riding of Calgary East, I have a large South Sudanese community with whom I interface quite a lot, as we continue to see how best we could build this country. Many of the ideas were that we could provide assistance, and during my visit to Juba prior to independence, Canada was giving assistance in building up democratic institutions. However, in talking to my constituents, I learned that many Canadian South Sudanese went back to rebuild this nation.

*Government Orders*

I remember at one time meeting President Kiir; half the people at the table told President Kiir that they had voted for me in the last election.

Canada played a very active role in building this new country. The country, as it was born, had great expectations for the people of South Sudan. Unfortunately, as things have progressed, as things move forward, tribalism has reared its ugly head in South Sudan, as it has everywhere else in other African countries.

Just recently, I wanted to bring in the ICC to Kenya. There was a tribal war as well in Kenya and other countries.

• (1815)

What is happening in the Central African Republic is very concerning. People are being killed due to ethnic and religious tensions.

We see what is happening.

I was in Rwanda two weeks ago to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the genocide of one tribe against the other, the Hutu as well as the Tutsis who were being killed by extremist Hutus. It was all based on tribalism. The same is taking place in Congo.

It is with great dismay and shock that we see South Sudan disintegrating into a tribal war. The problem is that, while the political leaders indulge in this, the poor people, the citizens, are ultimately paying the heaviest price. In South Sudan at this time the people are paying the heaviest price by being displaced.

We were sad when we learned of the attack at the United Nations. We strongly condemned the attack. People were seeking refuge from violence and ultimately lost their lives, including some peace-keepers.

This displacement is a very worrying factor to Canada. Canada calls upon both parties to return to the peace table and work toward building a nation, since they have just become independent.

IGAD is working hard under the chairmanship of Kenya and Ethiopia, and the peace talks are going on. Regrettably, those peace talks up to now have not brought any peaceful settlement, and the war and the displacement continue. The poor people are suffering.

Later in the evening, my colleagues will talk about how much development assistance Canada has provided and continues to provide to South Sudan.

We here in Canada are calling on both sides of South Sudan to return to the table as quickly as possible and work together toward ensuring that the unity government belonging to all of the tribes of South Sudan does not fall. They should look at examples of other countries in Africa and how much they have lost in the way of development. They must recognize that ordinary people are paying the biggest price. They are suffering and being displaced. More to the point, these bands are seeking all the so-called power, when in reality their people are being displaced by the thousands.

I am sorry to say it, but South Sudan currently has gone back 10 to 15 years in development due to this war. South Sudan has a lot of potential as it is one of the rich countries, with its oil. The diaspora of

South Sudanese in Canada and other countries like the U.S.A. can assist in building this country.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I again call very strongly on both sides of the conflict to go back to the table, to go back to what IGAD is doing, and sign a peace treaty and work for the people of South Sudan to build the country the people of Sudan had huge expectations for, as did I at the time it was born.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I heard the hon. member say that our Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke with conviction about the peace process in Ethiopia, which is on hold right now, as we know.

Perhaps the hon. member is aware that many members of the international community are saying that Canada speaks loudly and yells a lot, but that its actions are not always as convincing.

What is Canada doing to support the peace process?

• (1820)

[*English*]

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, I just returned from the African Union summit, where I met with the current foreign minister of South Sudan and talked to him directly. I have attended many of these conferences. I told the foreign minister how strongly Canada wants a return to the peace talks.

Let me be very clear. When I was at the African Union summit, the Africans told me many times that there must be an African-led solution to these problems. Right now that African-led solution is under IGAD and is led by Kenya and Ethiopia.

Canada is giving its full support. The IGAD people will be required to provide the country with the support it needs. At the current time, the African Union is demanding that it must be an African-led solution, and Canada supports that.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech and his personal experience. I would also like to recognize the Minister of International Development, who agreed to this take note debate.

The UN Security Council has stated that the recent attacks against civilians and UN peacekeepers in Bentiu may constitute war crimes. Does the minister think there is evidence that UNMISS is capable of fulfilling its mandate to protect civilians from ethnic cleansing, war crimes, crimes against humanity, or even genocide? What more could the international community do to enhance the capability of UNMISS? Does the minister think the Security Council should invoke the responsibility to protect? Will Canada join in enacting sanctions against key individuals fuelling the violence?

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, as I said in my speech, I was in Rwanda for the commemoration of the genocide. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, made a speech where he admitted that the UN had failed during the Rwanda genocide. He took responsibility for that factor and said that the UN would not do that again.

*Government Orders*

To answer the member's question, the United Nation's Secretary-General recognized that the failure in Rwanda would not be repeated in South Sudan. To that aspect, Canada is the ninth largest contributor to the peacekeeping force of the United Nations. As the Security Council has said, which we fully support, if this constitutes a crime against humanity, Canada will stand behind the Security Council to bring those who are responsible for killing innocent people back to face justice. Canada has already deported one of the individuals who was responsible for the genocide. Canada stands very much committed that those who commit crimes against humanity and kill citizens should face the full force of the international law, in this case, through the United Nations.

I was confident with what the UN Secretary-General said at the Rwanda memorial at Kigali just two weeks ago, that the UN would not accept what happened in Rwanda over there, and we stand fully supportive of that.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Mr. Chair, we are talking about targeted ethnic violence combined with a looming famine in South Sudan. Children are being massacred and recruited to fight. They are wounded and mutilated when they are caught in the gunfire. We saw the same horrible images coming out of Rwanda.

There is talk of doing something, but what, exactly? Will we send food? What is the proposed response to this urgent situation?

[*English*]

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, as I said, this is an African-led effort to bring peace over there. We are working with our allies. I do agree with the hon. member that the atrocities that have been committed are not acceptable to the international community. Therefore, what Canada has done is that we are meeting with our allies, with the African Union, with everyone, to determine where we can best make a difference, where we can best provide two fronts.

Tonight, my other colleagues will speak about what development assistance Canada is giving to South Sudan, but right now I am just talking on a political level about how to bring these individuals back to the table so that there is peace in that country. Hopefully, these talks that were in Addis Ababa will continue back and IGAD will take the lead again, and the African Union.

The African Union can tell us, as it has told us, that it would like an African-led solution to this problem. We are counting on the African Union to do that.

• (1825)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Chair, through you to the parliamentary secretary, will the government support a more robust role for UNMISS as the mission's mandate is being reviewed? Will the government consider providing additional funding to humanitarian partners, if the needs on the ground continue to increase? What actions will the government undertake to ensure that humanitarian partners are able to operate independently of the military and political mandates of UNMISS?

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, we have supported and will continue to support UNMISS and the United Nations in whatever capacity the United Nations and the Security Council decide. Canada

will do the part it has been doing and will continue to do so in supporting the United Nations mandate. Most important, we have said to ensure that violence comes to an end and the peace process starts.

At the same time, the member asked whether we would be assisting civil societies independent of the government. I can assure the hon. member that this government does not provide assistance to the governments. We provide assistance through other means and, most important, through NGOs.

However, ultimately, the goal is to ensure that it reaches the people who are suffering under this war. For that reason, Canada will be there and will stand with the people of South Sudan.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his remarks.

My colleague said that this process must be led by Africans themselves, and we all agree. Obviously, there is no doubt about that. However, to say that it must be an African-led process does not mean that they have to do it completely on their own or without any support.

Would my colleague agree that resources should be allocated to the African Union to help it carry out its mandate?

[*English*]

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai:** Indeed, Mr. Chair, Canada is and has been a supporter of the African Union. I attend all African Union summits that take place. I have been attending the last five years to have Canada's engagement over there and to assist the African Union in meeting many of the challenges that are arising in Africa.

Today the challenge is South Sudan, the Central African Republic and others, but Canada remains heavily engaged with the African Union to continue to work faster toward achieving what we all want: a peaceful Africa where the conflict does not exist. Africa is a continent of the future, and everybody agrees, because of the tremendous opportunity and all those things. All that has been lost to all the wars that are taking place for no reason.

Therefore, Canada will support the African Union as it moves forward in trying to address many of the challenges that Africa faces.

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** Before we resume debate, I will just remind hon. members that the Standing Orders for take note debates permit, in the spirit of a less formal debate, members to take seats in the chamber that might be closer to one another and this often means an exchange that is complement to the subject that is at hand in the House.

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

•(1830)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, over the past few months, we have talked a lot about many very important crises in Ukraine, Syria—of course, we cannot forget Syria—and the Central African Republic. All of these crises are very serious and very important. However, there is one that, unfortunately, we talk about a little less, although we should show more concern. I am talking about the political and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan.

Here is a brief history of the situation. As we know, South Sudan was created in 2011 following a referendum in which nearly 99% of participants voted for independence. In fact, South Sudan is the youngest country in the world. The international community invested significantly in that country, hoping that a well-functioning and stable government would be established following years of civil war.

However, we know that democracy and good governance cannot necessarily be built in just a few months or even a few years. It takes time. Years of civil war had already left South Sudan with one of the worst development rankings in the world and extremely low humanitarian indicators, as well as a lack of infrastructure.

[*English*]

In December, political differences among South Sudanese leadership led to an outbreak in violence, leaving thousands dead and displacing hundreds of thousands of people. With the coming rainy season, there are major challenges in terms of aid delivery, and the number of refugees and internally displaced people are rising.

[*Translation*]

In the past few weeks alone, violence has escalated. The United Nations reported that 200 people were killed in Bentiu on April 15 and during violent attacks at the Bor base on April 17.

The United Nations report stated that civilians were targeted on the basis of their ethnicity. Much like the messages broadcast on Radio mille collines in Rwanda 20 years ago, radio stations are broadcasting hate messages encouraging people to rape women of certain ethnicities and drive members of certain groups out of their cities and towns.

Mr. Lanzer, the top United Nations humanitarian official in South Sudan, said that this past week has been the darkest in the nation's history. There are fears that this could turn into genocide and ethnic cleansing. Those are the words that people, the media and experts are starting to use. The situation is being compared to that in Rwanda, and I cannot help but acknowledge what my colleague opposite pointed out about how the Secretary-General of the United Nations took responsibility for what happened in Rwanda.

The United Nations is an association of nations. When the Secretary-General of the United Nations takes responsibility for an event or a tragedy, he does so on behalf of all countries. Like all other countries, Canada must therefore take responsibility for this tragedy and fulfill its commitment to ensuring that such a tragedy never comes to pass again, not in South Sudan and not in the Central African Republic, despite what that same member said yesterday

### *Government Orders*

about how preventing genocide is not a good way to spend taxpayers' money. Forgive me for going off on a tangent, but I felt I had to emphasize that.

Back to South Sudan.

•(1835)

[*English*]

I have been rather involved in this issue. I have met with a lot of specialists and people directly affected by this crisis, including representatives from the diaspora. They all talked to me about the absolutely alarming situation.

It is clear that this conflict has evolved into a terrible, monstrous humanitarian crisis.

[*Translation*]

More than 4.9 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. More than 1 million people have been displaced in 100 days, including 916,000 people inside Sudan. Let us try to imagine that. I come from Montreal, so one million people is a good part of the population of Montreal, or not far from it. Nearly 290,000 people have crossed borders to take refuge in neighbouring countries, which often simply do not have the means to receive them adequately.

One of the really worrying statistics is that half the population of South Sudan is made up of children. Clearly, most of the refugees are children as well. Even before the crisis, those children were in an absolutely terrible situation.

I have here a document from UNICEF Canada that explains it very well:

[*English*]

“Time is running out for the children of the world’s newest nation—we need better resources, better access, peace and security. Children cannot wait”.

[*Translation*]

As I was saying, most of the refugees are children who were living in extremely difficult situations beforehand and who now have to flee from their homes and their part of the country. Indeed, 95% of the refugees are women and children.

They are in a terrible situation but there are a lot of other problems. Farmers have not had the time to stockpile or to plant their crops. There are fears of a severe famine. I will come back to that later.

Moreover, the rainy season increases the cost of involvement by humanitarian aid organizations and makes it difficult, if not almost impossible, to reach the most vulnerable. I have seen how the roads are in Africa and what a rainy season is, because I have lived there. Essentially, the roads become impassable.

I now come back to the issue of food because we have to put a human face on it. It is estimated that about 7 million people will be experiencing food insecurity and facing the risk of famine. I come from Montreal and I know that this number corresponds to the population of Quebec.

*Government Orders*

There is also an increase in the cases of cholera, polio and ethnic violence. Regional terrorist groups are known to be present, including some associated with al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab. There are cases of sexual violence, rape and sexual exploitation. Children are being recruited by militias and schools are being used as military camps. The situation is appalling.

Requests are coming from all sides. Canada needs to be there, doing its part. Despite the terrible situation, there is hope. Many observers say that there is hope for South Sudan.

I have repeatedly asked for increased funding for humanitarian and long-term aid for South Sudan. I sent a letter to the minister, and I raised the issue during question period, in the media. On April 1, the government finally increased aid for South Sudan. I was happy to hear the news.

However, I believe that more needs to be done. We need to provide financial support for the peace talks in Ethiopia; continue to closely monitor the situation on the ground; develop a short-term humanitarian aid strategy and a long-term development strategy that includes flexibility and a rapid response, since this is an important issue; and support the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan.

I have a number of pages in front of me. I could speak to this topic for half an hour, but I would likely bore my colleagues. Nevertheless, this is a very important subject.

• (1840)

[English]

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her passion, commitment, experience and history.

As she points out, of the five million people who need humanitarian assistance, only 38% have been reached so far. There is a major food crisis currently hitting South Sudan, endangering thousands of people, threatening to further destroy the gains made over the past five years and testing commitments by the international community and lessons learned from past crises. Planting requires people, seeds and equipment to be in the right place at the right time during the planting season. This has not happened this year due to the conflict displacing people, agricultural equipment being destroyed or stolen and low availability of seeds due to crisis-related consumption.

The rains are coming, famine is probable, and I am wondering what recommendations my hon. colleague would make.

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for her question. I know that she is as concerned as I am about these issues and she works hard in these files.

I think that we are facing two problems. We need to look at it from a short-term perspective, for the year ahead. People were unable to plant their crops because their grain stock was vandalized and because of the ongoing war. They were too afraid to go work peacefully in their fields. There is therefore a risk that there will be no harvest and, in the short term, that would create an even more serious crisis. While taking action in the short term, we must also think about the long term.

[English]

I am sure we can chew gum and walk at the same time.

[Translation]

That is what we must now do here. We have to think about the short term, the urgency of the situation and the human beings caught in this situation.

We also have to think about long-term peace, an essential condition. In that regard, Canada could provide more support for the peace process, which has to be led by the countries concerned, including the African Union. This process must be supported in order to achieve peace. Long-term development starts with good governance and the establishment of institutions. It is in our interest. South Sudan is a country of focus for Canada. If that really is the case, we must be there.

A few years ago, Task Force South Sudan, a dedicated working group at Foreign Affairs, was working on South Sudan. Unfortunately, this team disappeared, even though we need it more than ever before.

We have to think about the short term and respond to the emergency. However, we must not forget the long term so that we do not find ourselves in a similar situation and especially so that the South Sudanese do not find themselves in a similar situation in a few years.

• (1845)

[English]

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I congratulate the member on her presentation tonight.

We all know that the situation in South Sudan is terrible. With a war raging and atrocities taking place, it is hard to imagine. The safety of those delivering humanitarian assistance is in peril. What would the member suggest we do, right now, while these hostilities are taking place?

We know what has happened in Syria. We cannot get into Syria with humanitarian assistance.

Are those offering humanitarian assistance in peril? How would the member suggest we get that assistance there right now?

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that we must choose between putting humanitarian workers at risk and abandoning the South Sudanese to their fate.

My hon. colleague, who serves with me on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, mentioned Syria, which we have heard about. In the case of Syria, the United Nations adopted a very strong resolution calling for access for humanitarian workers to the area.

*Government Orders*

That did not resolve all the issues. However, witnesses who appeared before the committee told us that the UN resolution had made it easier for humanitarian workers to gain access to the area. We have to work on several fronts at the UN, including with organizations that could lay charges of crimes against humanity, in order to facilitate access for humanitarian workers. That seems to be the only solution.

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Mr. Chair, General Dallaire has said over and over again that there must never be another Rwanda, but that is what is happening.

Earlier, a Conservative member said that we need to let the African Union take action and manage its own problems.

If we let the African Union take action and we do not intervene at the international level, would that not mean that we are choosing one side over the other?

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Mr. Chair, I think that would mean choosing the side of abandonment. I would like to add that, in my personal opinion, it would mean choosing the side of shame.

It has been said time and time again—I am feeling emotional—that we would never allow another situation like Rwanda to occur. We cannot let this happen in South Sudan. I apologize for bringing up another country that is being talked about a lot right now, but we cannot let this happen in the Central African Republic either.

We must be courageous and support UNMISS, the UN Mission in South Sudan. Even if the African Union has to make the effort and initiate the peace talks, that does not mean that we cannot provide resources. Material and technical resources are often needed. Money is needed to organize meetings and seek out the expertise required.

Traditionally, Canada has provided great expertise on how to bring people to the negotiation table, conduct negotiations and ensure that women are involved in the peace process. Women are key players in any peace process. A peace process cannot truly succeed without the participation of women. Canada can contribute its expertise, its voice and its resources. We can really get involved. I think that it is our duty and moral obligation to do so.

[*English*]

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, South Sudan faces three concurrent crises, with an ongoing conflict, an acute humanitarian crisis, and a chronic food and security problem.

There are differing stories as to what started the conflict. President Salva Kiir claimed that former vice-president Riek Machar had attempted a coup. Machar claimed that the president was attempting to get rid of the opposition. After five weeks of fighting, an agreement on the cessation of hostilities, or COH, was signed on January 23, 2014 between the government and opposition forces, but both sides have repeatedly violated the COH. Talks between the government and opposition forces in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa have been on and off for weeks. Heavy fighting resumed on February 18, when ethnic clashes occurred inside a UN compound, causing 2,000 of 20,000 civilians to flee.

The political divisions within South Sudan have resulted in heavy fighting and mass atrocities committed by rival pro and anti-government forces, and ethnic mobilization threatens wider inter-

communal violence. In fact, there has been a serious escalation in violence over the past two weeks. The UN reported that over 400 people were killed in Bentiu on April 15. Civilians were targeted on the basis of their ethnicity and nationality. This incident has been described as “a game-changer”. Radio stations were used to broadcast hate speech, urging men to rape women of specific ethnicities and demanding that rival groups to be expelled from the town.

Because of the ongoing security concerns and the lack of personnel, the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan, or UNMISS, is facing challenges to effectively protecting civilians outside their bases. Another violent attack on civilians occurred in the UNMISS camp in Bor on April 17. Over 40 people were killed, and many others were wounded.

The increase in violence is causing significant protection risks for civilians and further displacement. A rapid influx of 21,000 civilians have sought refuge in the base in just 48 hours. Many children have been lost or separated from family members, so they are particularly vulnerable, and women and girls are vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence. Overcrowding means an increased risk of disease and competition for lifesaving assistance.

South Sudan is a level 3 humanitarian emergency. Violence has displaced over one million people, 923,000 within the country, more than half of them children, and 300,000 people have fled to neighbouring countries. The current crisis response plan calls for \$1.27 billion U.S. for relief programs in the coming months. To date, the plan is only 39% funded.

Livelihoods as well as regular development assistance have been disrupted, households looted, and markets destroyed. As a result, more than 3.7 million people are at risk of food insecurity as well as acute malnutrition and disease. According to UNICEF's representative in the country, “Children and families in South Sudan are now facing unprecedented suffering—with worrying signs of malnutrition and disease outbreaks”.

Before the outbreak of fighting, basic humanitarian indicators showed South Sudanese children to be some of the most vulnerable children in the world. Today, the youngest citizens of South Sudan are suffering the most from rising levels of malnutrition and increasing violence. Children's schools are often occupied by warring sides, with enrolment rates dropping significantly. World Vision's national director has said:

Children in particular have been deeply affected by the sights of death, destruction, and rape.... South Sudan is quickly becoming a place where children cannot find safety anywhere.

With the rainy season imminent, the situation will only get worse. Lifesaving supplies must be deployed to the hardest to reach in order to avert a humanitarian catastrophe. Air drops are taking place, and famine is probable.

*Government Orders*

The United Nations fears that South Sudan is, quote, “imploding”, but with so many crises around the world, the world's newest country is getting scant media attention. With the recent increases in violence, the international community has sharpened the tone of its condemnation.

● (1850)

Despite Canada's commitment to focus on “helping to set the conditions for long-term peace, stability and prosperity” in South Sudan, the government let the months of February and March pass before making public statements.

On March 25, 2014, the United States announced \$83 million in additional humanitarian assistance to the people of South Sudan, for a total of \$411 million for fiscal years 2013-14. On April 1, 2014, Canada's Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie announced \$25.8 million of humanitarian assistance to South Sudan through its annual DFATD's consolidated appeals process.

I have two questions. How much additional money was allocated in the chronic round because of increased needs? How much of this money would have been allocated even without the current crisis?

In addition, the government has a long-term commitment of \$51.5 million for food security and livelihood support, and we thank the minister.

Canadian members of Parliament should be aware of the worsening situation. To this end, I invited my Conservative and NDP colleagues to co-host a briefing with me for all parliamentarians on South Sudan. We heard from Médecins Sans Frontières, UNICEF, and World Vision.

The House of Commons foreign affairs and international development committees should undertake a study to follow up on this last report, and I thank all parties for agreeing to my request for tonight's take note debate.

Both sides of the conflict need to fully abide by the commitments made under the COH agreement and to continue to engage to resolve the crisis. Major international supporters should assist in mediation by facilitating the monitoring and verification mechanism of the COH and providing support to UNMISS. All perpetrators of mass atrocities must be held accountable, and a comprehensive strategy for ethnic and political reconciliation must be put in place.

How is the Government of Canada engaging at the political level? Will the Government of Canada support the peace talks in Addis Ababa by offering mediators to the warring parties and other stakeholders? Will it support civil society coalitions that are working for reconciliation inside South Sudan? How will the Government of Canada continue to monitor humanitarian needs and respond in a timely fashion to the changing needs on the ground?

Will the government consider support to UNMISS to protect civilians, especially women and children, from violence? Will the government encourage the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to travel to South Sudan and request a report to the UN Security Council on the situation of children in South Sudan, highlighting grave violations? Will the government request that the African Union have child

protection specialists on the commission of inquiry into human rights violations?

While the government has given significantly in the past, its approach needs to be rethought and needs to take into consideration the long-term problems caused by the civil conflict begun in December 2013.

Each of us in this House has a role to play. Let us engage with South Sudanese parliamentarians through the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association and share in our constituencies what is going on.

If the violence does not stop, South Sudan could slip further into ethnic conflict, with a risk of disintegration and the potential for regional disaster. The Central African Republic and Somalia remain embroiled in civil war. Eritrea is under dictatorship, and Sudan is on the verge of economic collapse.

The international community is struggling to find a coherent way to respond to a rapidly deteriorating and changing context. It is essential to remember lessons learned from earlier crises, to act immediately and at the scale necessary to prevent a much larger disaster. Canada must remain engaged in keeping South Sudan at the forefront of international attention.

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, first, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her speech and for the collegial work that we have been able to do together on such an important issue.

The root causes of this situation include poverty, marginalization, a lack of opportunity—and, often, a lack of future—and ethnic tensions. How can Canada structure its international development policy in order to try to deal with these problems before they occur?

● (1900)

[*English*]

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague. I enjoy working with her very much. I think we have done good work together, and there is much more to be done.

I would like to highlight what the member pointed out.

Before the conflict, people should know that 2.4 million people in South Sudan were food insecure and required assistance; 230,000 children were impacted annually by malnutrition, even during strong harvest seasons; and only 4% of arable land was cultivated. Only 10% of the children completed primary school, despite high enrolment rates of 1.4 million, and 84% of the women could not read or write. One in seven children died before their fifth birthday, only 10% of deliveries were attended by skilled birth attendants, and only 40% of the people were estimated to have access to health services.

We need to respond to what is happening now. As my colleague pointed out, we need a strategy for the medium term and we need to work at the long term. We need to look at these different scales.



I want to point out that now, adding conflict and possible war crimes, 21,000 people were displaced in 48 hours. There is overcrowding, competition for shelter and life-saving humanitarian aid, and an increased risk of disease and infection.

We have to stand by the people of South Sudan. We have to do more.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in this debate.

Canada has always played an important role in responding to global crises and tragedy. With appropriate, timely, and effective assistance, our contributions aim to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain the dignity of those affected by conflicts and natural disasters.

As we know, politically motivated violence and ethnic conflict have gripped South Sudan for more than four months. If the poignant images alone have not been enough to make us want to help, the number of casualties and victims makes it clear that we must.

It is estimated that between 10,000 and 40,000 people have died in the violence. Today some 817,000 South Sudanese are displaced within the country, and over 270,000 have fled as refugees to Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Uganda.

It is impossible for us to understand what it must be like to be so afraid and so desperate that the only hope is to flee one's home and leave everything behind, yet that is reality for thousands of South Sudanese civilians, people who just three short years ago voted overwhelmingly for independence and rejoiced in the birth of their new nation.

South Sudan's new beginning formally ended 22 years of civil war that caused the country to have some of the worst development and humanitarian indicators in the world. An estimated 90% of the country's 10.8 million people live below the poverty line. An estimated seven million people in South Sudan are at risk of food insecurity. The maternal mortality rate is among the highest in the world: for every 100,000 births, over 2,000 mothers die. The child mortality rate is no better, with 106 deaths for every 1,000 live births.

These are some of South Sudan's regular development challenges, the challenges that made Canada want to invest development dollars there in the first place. They are among the reasons that our development programming in South Sudan centres on saving the lives of mothers and children and on improving agricultural capabilities so that people can get the food they need and earn a living off the land.

Now South Sudan faces challenges of another kind. The conflict has caused the country to plunge deeper into instability, and that concerns us.

We worry for South Sudan's political and economic health, already fragile to begin with. We worry for its people, already struggling to overcome the challenges they face.

In response to the dramatically increasing needs and the international humanitarian system that has ranked South Sudan among the highest priorities, United Nations agencies and interna-

### *Government Orders*

tional NGOs have ramped up their presence and widened their operations considerably throughout the country.

Overall, despite being hindered in their efforts to assist people by the continuing insecurity and looting, humanitarian agencies are increasing their capabilities and responses to the crisis. They are particularly focused on strengthening responses outside of the capital, Juba, where there have been considerable unmet needs.

During this crisis, Canada once again stepped up its humanitarian efforts as part of the international community. On April 1, the Minister of International Development announced nearly \$25 million in new funding in response to 2014 appeals from the United Nations, the International Red Cross movement, and Canadian non-governmental organizations. The money will help to get people the food they need, put a roof over their head, give them increased access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities and, for the ill or wounded, access to emergency medical care.

We hope that our efforts, in co-operation with those of our friends and partners, will contribute to putting an end to this spiralling violence and ensure a calm and peaceful transition process in South Sudan.

● (1905)

Recipients of our funding have included the United Nations World Food Programme, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Humanitarian Air Service, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, World Relief Canada, Médecins Sans Frontières Canada, and World Vision Canada. Based on assessments, these organizations are best positioned to ensure that people are physically safe and receive proper health care, and that they have food, water, and shelter. It is worth pointing out that their work is not easy. A humanitarian mission never is, particularly not under a black cloud of violence as is the case in South Sudan.

In January, Valerie Amos, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said that thousands of South Sudanese were going without help because of interference in humanitarian activities. That should never happen. Intentionally preventing access to life-saving assistance is deplorable, much like acts of violence against those working to keep civilians safe. Since the conflict began, three humanitarian workers have been killed, caught in the crosshairs of a conflict had that nothing to do with them or with an overwhelming majority of South Sudanese. Canada condemns such cowardly attacks, and calls for full, safe, and unhindered access for humanitarian organizations in South Sudan and in all other places where humanitarian workers are engaged in life-saving activity.

Few places are more challenging for aid workers than South Sudan. In another few weeks, the rainy season will begin, cutting off up to 60% of the country. Road access in key locations of humanitarian response is minimal or impossible from May until November. Canada has offered considerable support since the conflict began, and will continue to pay close attention to ensure that we are doing everything we can to keep South Sudan civilians safe from this crisis.

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•(1910)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague, who sits on the foreign affairs committee, for his intervention.

It is with great alarm and sadness and with concern around the recent events in the whole area that we have been discussing, that I posed some questions on the Central African Republic, concerns about what we have been hearing in Burundi and of course South Sudan. We had done a study on South Sudan just before the elections, in the last Parliament. One of the things we underlined was the need for Canada to stay engaged. We had been involved in the 2005 peace agreement and accord but it was very clear at the time, before full independence, that South Sudan would need our support.

My question for my colleague across the way is this. At a time when things are so fragile and with a nascent country, the newest country that we have seen formed in the last number of years in the family of nations, would the member not agree with me that we really do need to game up, that we need to provide more support, both in governance and in security, and ensure that we do not take our eyes off? I am concerned, as many are, that we had a strong commitment before, but since we have seen the Sudan task force basically dissolve, there have been concerns about what our short-term and long-term commitments are. I would just like to get his comments on that.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Mr. Chair, Canada is concerned with the humanitarian situation in South Sudan. We all know that. We are deeply concerned by the reports of ethnically targeted violence. Canada calls for the perpetrators of those crimes to be identified and brought to justice.

The government is providing life-saving food, water, sanitation, medical assistance, emergency shelter, and protection for those in need. Canada is providing emergency food assistance to 2.3 million food-insecure people throughout the country, providing access to over one million people across South Sudan to improve sanitation and safe water, helping 80,700 pregnant women access antenatal care, and building a new maternity ward in eastern South Sudan to provide 24-hour emergency obstetric and newborn care services.

Canada is very concerned by the deteriorating situation in South Sudan. Canada condemns these acts in the strongest possible terms. We call on all parties to immediately allow for the safe passage of humanitarian assistance to those to whom it is intended. We will continue to monitor the situation very closely.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to reiterate, I really hope foreign affairs will do a study regarding South Sudan.

To my hon. colleague, will the government consider increasing support to UNMISS beyond its assessed and voluntary contributions to the UN to protect civilians, especially women and children, from violence? For example, the government has previously funded protection of civilian capacity for the UN operation in the DRC. Will it consider doing the same for South Sudan? Also, will the government adjust and renew its long-term development programming?

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Mr. Chair, I will answer that the best I can. I know that we have recently put more money into the UN and

as time goes on we are monitoring the situation very closely. I am quite sure, along with our allies and UN commitments, we will be there for the people of South Sudan.

•(1915)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, along with the disturbing, horrific reports we have had just a week ago, we know that there are ethnic tensions. We know there has been a manipulation of ethnicity and that this is something that will only be dealt with if there is strong international support, not just what we have had in the past, but what is required clearly for the short and medium term.

I appreciate that my colleague is not the minister and he cannot speak for the government that way. I appreciate that and I am not trying to corner him. However, I get the impression after we have heard the really disturbing reports, which were difficult to watch if anyone saw the news reports recently, the kinds of things we are seeing are a much smaller scale of what happened 20 years ago in Rwanda. There is targeting of people and the use of violence in a very perverted way.

Would he not agree at least that we really need to have another look at what is happening right now, in real time, in South Sudan, in light of the fact that we have a historical past? The Government of Canada has done a lot of good work there, this government and previous governments. Would he not agree that we really need to look at some ways that we can deal with this most recent situation? I am just talking to him as a member across the way, a member of the foreign affairs committee. Perhaps we should look at some other recommendations to game up, as they say, to deal with the present situation, which is very dangerous.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Mr. Chair, I do know that it has been put very plainly that Africans like most problems in Africa to be solved by Africans. I have heard that over the last number of years. They want to see African forces, or African forces want to go in to some of these situations to help them make them work. As our parliamentary secretary said, he sits with the African Union at various times. He goes to its meetings to help give guidance and to make sure that we can perhaps work together to make these atrocities go away.

It will not happen overnight, I am quite sure, but I feel that our government is working very hard, along with the people in the UN and the African forces to make sure that we can try to bring an end to this violence in South Sudan.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Chair, again, I would really like to thank everybody for being here tonight.

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I would also like to raise what my colleague from the NDP was talking about. He said that the UN initially said that 200 died in Bentiu, and now we know that it is 400 in the last weeks. According to the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children, of which Canada is a key supporter, since the conflict began in December, 2013, and through to April, the UN received more reports of grave child rights violations in armed conflict in South Sudan than it did for all of 2013. It has affected over 22,000 boys and girls through injuries, rape, death, and recruitment into armed forces.

I wonder if the government will encourage the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to travel to South Sudan and request a report to the UN Security Council on the situation of children in South Sudan? There have been 22,000 affected between December and April. The children cannot wait.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Mr. Chair, I know a group from London, Ontario, that is quite involved in South Sudan and in an agriculture venture there. It was just getting things to a point where it was able to produce more than enough grain to feed its people and sell some of the other products. I am quite sure that we have people on the ground. These people are not really NGOs, but they are doing it on their own with no government support. It has been a great situation that has been working well.

I do not know whether they are affected. They are near the Nile. I do not know if they are affected that far away, but I am sure that the minister and our government will be putting as many resources and as much of a push on the issue in South Sudan as we can.

● (1920)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I rise tonight to provide some input from the New Democratic Party on what we think is important for all of us to be seized with about South Sudan.

I remember very well my first year as a member of Parliament. Some of the most important debates we had here were around Afghanistan, but the other issue we were seized with was what was happening in Sudan. At the time, it was not divided into the two countries. I will never forget, as a new MP, being quite taken with the fact that there were things we were doing in Sudan at the time, but there was a deep crisis in Darfur, the situation in Darfur that many have said was like a genocide in slow motion.

We really pushed to have more done. At the time, we were pushing for more lift capacity, helicopters, to support the United Nations mission, and we wanted to have the government seized with the issue. In fact there was some good work done and the government did provide some resources, albeit we wanted more, but I must acknowledge that the Conservatives did support the mission and focused on Darfur at the time. We believed more lift capacity was available and they could have used it, but anyhow.

I say that because at the time we were all looking toward a resolution of the conflict and looked at the 2005 peace accord, to which Canada was a major contributor, and we had the development into a separate country. This was very exciting. There were many people concerned at the time that we would not see a successful partition and the creation of a new country.

However, as I just said in my question to my colleague across the way, at the time just before the creation of the new country of South Sudan, the foreign affairs committee—of which I was a member at the time, before the last Canadian election—had warned that there would be a need to stay with the Sudanese, to stay engaged, to make sure that, just because a new country had been created, it did not mean we could walk away.

We have been concerned that the Sudan task force that was set up to help in the Department of Foreign Affairs simply was dissolved at the very time when there was a need to stay with the South Sudanese and governance and making sure this new nascent country was going to be successful, to help it with economic development, to help it with basic governance, to make sure there would not be this kind of cleavage, ethnically speaking, or there would not be the external threats from Sudan in the north. Not that we predicted these exact events that just happened, but we did know and predict that there would be a need for support, and many other countries have noted that.

I have already mentioned the deep concern I and many of us have with what is happening in the region. Of course, there is CAR, the Central African Republic, and concerns about some of the reports coming out of Burundi, but what we heard this past week about the massacres in South Sudan clearly underlined and underscored the need for the world community to take action.

It is important and instructive to look at what some of the agencies are saying on the ground. Médecins Sans Frontières has been very clear about the need for additional support, and I know the parliamentary secretary stood in the House to acknowledge the loss of humanitarian workers. I thank her for that. In doing so, we need to acknowledge their loss but also what they are asking us to do. They are asking us to scale up humanitarian aid. Médecins Sans Frontières is very focused and does some extraordinarily good work in very dangerous, precarious situations. It wants us to scale up aid and make sure there is going to be support for that. In this take note debate forum, we want to talk about ideas, and it is a good idea to scale up the aid and look at how we can help.

● (1925)

We have to take a look at how the UN is working and how these agencies are co-ordinated on the ground. That is something it has pointed out. The humanitarian aid must remain independent and impartial, so that the humanitarian organizations can gain access at this point. This is a conflict, and in a conflict it is imperative that there are clear lines and avenues for aid to get to the people. That is why it believes it is important to have the aid go through these independent actors, so that it can get to the people who need it and that it will be impartial.

We also need to look at these recent crises that have happened and how the Government of Canada can assist the UN to restore credibility by calling for the establishment of an independent humanitarian coordinator. This is very important, because, as I mentioned before, South Sudan right now is not able to govern itself independently. Why? It is a nascent government. It does not have the infrastructure in place. It is a smart thing that Médecins Sans Frontières is saying, which is to have the humanitarian coordinator deal with what is happening on the ground, deal with capacities.

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It also points out that the Government of Canada can demand that both parties of the conflict uphold their obligations under the international humanitarian law to directly provide or allow for the provision of humanitarian aid to all people during the conflict. This is really important, because then the international community is saying to both sides of the conflict that their role here is very clear under the international law and they must allow for the provision of humanitarian assistance. It is something we can do and we must do, and I would urge the Minister of Foreign Affairs to engage in that light.

There is widespread hunger because of this conflict among people who have nothing to do with the conflict, who are not on either side but are affected by it. This, of course, breeds more misery. We have seen some of the estimates that have come out. An estimated 7 million people right now are at risk of food insecurity. We know how that can happen very quickly if left unattended. The United States is likely to keep up support in the Upper Nile, but we have problems in parts that we just cannot reach right now because of the conflict. We have to work with our partners in this. South Sudanese people should be planting right now, but they are not able to because of the conflict.

These are all things that we could be doing. Médecins Sans Frontières has been helpful in its very specific recommendations.

The other aspect of this that we have to look at is the neighbourhood. There are a lot of pressures on South Sudan. We know about the north. We have to see that there is going to be support that South Sudan will receive from people in the neighbourhood. That is going to be helpful. We have to see “do no harm” from those in the north who, in the past, have been belligerent in affecting people.

Right now, we need to support the UN mission. The United Nations mission in South Sudan is hosting about 70,000 civilians who are fleeing ethnic reprisals. Right now, it is very under-resourced. It needs more resources, frankly. The UN mission in South Sudan needs more support. This is something that Canada can consider supporting. I am not talking about troops for a peace-keeping mission, as I said today in the House, but certainly support that can help.

Let me give members a couple of ideas. This is from the International Crisis Group. I will maybe get into this in the questions and answers. It said:

To the UN Security Council:

1. Amend the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to ensure it is consistent across the country—

This is what I mentioned. There is a need for support in different places, because places are isolated. It goes on to say that the mandate should be amended so that it:

...emphasises protection of civilians, human rights reporting, support for the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) mediation process and logistical help for the African Union (AU) Commission of Inquiry.

This is to find out exactly what happened here.

I will quote one more bit before my time is up.

● (1930)

The second recommendation from the crisis group is:

2. Signal clearly that leaders will be held responsible for the actions of troops they command, and any interference with UNMISS and humanitarian operations may give rise to targeted sanctions.

I will finish with the third recommendation, which is:

3. Ensure that any support provided to an IGAD or other regional force is consistent with and does not undermine UNMISS' ability to carry out its mandated tasks, particularly its protection of civilians responsibilities.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for his thoughtful speech and the new ideas he has brought to the debate.

Since signing a comprehensive peace agreement with Sudan in 2005 and becoming independent in 2011, South Sudan has not undergone a much-needed process of reconciliation. There are deep-seated ethnic grievances, which will need to be addressed in order for South Sudan to avoid a repeated escalation of violence, and now we see UNMISS's bases have been specifically targeted.

I wonder what the member thinks Canada could contribute to the peace and reconciliation efforts.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I think that, first of all, we have to communicate to all parties. This is not just Canada, of course. This is a collective responsibility in the international community. We have to effectively communicate to all parties that it is absolutely clear that their responsibility is to protect civilians. That is the first and immediate thing. The longer term will touch on what the member has mentioned.

I think there is a need to establish three separate negotiation tracks, focused on the SPLM, which would be one track, the armed groups, and communal conflict, tracks that are appropriately sequenced, and contribute to the broader piece of national political dialogue.

If we are able to kind of separate into three tracks the immediate protection and then the longer-term negotiations, looking at the role of the SPLM, the other armed groups, and the kind of communal conflicts that are happening, we can then get to the final stage, which is what the member has touched on, to look at some form of reconciliation.

This is something that will be more difficult, but important. It is something on which we can work with our partners after we have dealt with the short term, such as I have just laid out, the SPLM, the armed groups, and what is happening in some of these communal conflicts, which are the three tracks that are there. The international community must then focus on working together to look at reconciliation, which would provide the basis for South Sudan to be able to be truly independent, and not just in name but in governance.

● (1935)

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, first of all, I would like to thank my colleague for his concern for South Sudan.

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I had the opportunity to be in South Sudan two years ago at a time when the Jonglei province was of particular concern. Fortunately, much of the conflict in the north had been somewhat settled at that point in time, but obviously there were concerns around the Jonglei province in particular, which is still where a lot of the conflict is taking place.

Given that we have organizations in Africa like the African Union, the African Commission, ECOWAS, IGAD, and SADC, I wonder if my colleague has any thought on how they might participate in helping to find resolution.

There are cultural issues that are very sensitive. We know that. There are geographic considerations that are very sensitive.

I wonder if my colleague has any thoughts on how the African organizations themselves can help to negotiate some of this much-needed conflict resolution.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, that is a great question. What we need to do is provide support, as we have done with other countries. Guatemala comes to mind, when it was dealing with the horrific mass atrocities in the 1980s.

The AU Commission of Inquiry into human rights abuses will need adequate staff, adequate training, and resources to consult widely to get things functioning. That is something we can help with concretely, with all of the other partners the member mentioned.

Make no mistake. Canada is seen as a valid partner, a wanted partner. As I said, it is with some sadness, as a matter of fact, that we disbanded the Sudanese task force, the desk within foreign affairs. It was noted just recently at committee that the funding in the last couple of years has lapsed. I do not think it is a question of resources. I think it is a question of focusing and coordinating the resources and providing the support South Sudan needs.

We can work with all of the organizations she mentioned to provide, as I mentioned, to the AU Commission of Inquiry, something we did in Guatemala on justice and human rights protection. Our assistance would not only be welcomed but celebrated, because it is something we have done before. I gave the government credit for what it did before, as well as the previous government. It is just a matter of being consistent, carrying on, and showing that we can play a constructive role.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I listened carefully, as I always do, to my colleague's speech. We are all concerned about the situation in South Sudan, of course.

We are asking the government to provide additional assistance, whether that means humanitarian assistance or forcing the people of South Sudan to sign a treaty for the peace and stability of the country.

However, does my colleague think that the government should sign the treaty to prevent sales of arms, including small arms, which are often found in these conflicts, especially in African countries?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, what the member is getting at is the arms trade treaty. We are still waiting for the government to formally respond as to whether it is going to sign the treaty. I note that all of our allies have done this, including the United States, the U.K., and Australia. I say that because it is related. The arms trade treaty was negotiated to deal with the trade of illegal arms and arms sales, particularly small arms. Small arms in Africa have been noted as the arms of mass destruction, because they have done so much damage. They have flooded into the region, particularly the Sahel but also the area we are talking about.

While I am on my feet, I will say that we should not only sign the arms trade treaty to send the right message that we are serious about armed conflict. A really smart idea, again coming from the crisis group, is the idea of establishing a contact group. We have seen this method used before. The AU would be part of it, the UN, the U.S., the U.K., Norway, the European Union, China, South Africa, and maybe even Canada. I think that would be supportive. I say maybe even Canada, because I think the government needs to start to take those leadership opportunities when they arise.

I am getting the sense from the other side, in the case of CAR and in the case of Sudan, and I heard it from one of the members earlier, that because we are not within the continent, and as was said before, it should be an African solution, we should not take part. Maybe we just happen to disagree. Clearly it is not about us dictating terms. I see my colleague shaking her head. I think she would agree that we need to be involved.

I would like it clarified by the government how we are involved. It is difficult to see the progress in terms of engagement in Africa when we have disbanded the Sudanese task force, when we have seen a lapse in funding, money Parliament appropriated to the Department of Foreign Affairs, to CIDA, that is not being invested.

This is not about saving money and good administration. This is about hundreds of millions of dollars that were entrusted to the government to invest in its priorities. That is how the process works.

There are ideas we are putting forward here tonight. The government will have its own ideas and consult within its own departments. We need to see our country step up in Africa right now, because there is crisis in the Sahel, in the Central African Republic, and in Sudan. It would be applauded by everyone in this House. It would be supported. It would also be something that would make a difference, clearly in the case of Sudan and clearly in the case of the Central African Republic. Finally, I think Canadians would want to see us do it.

For all those reasons, I plead with the government to look at their strategy in Africa. If it wants to do things differently, fine, but let us get going on this, because people are asking for our help, and we need to be there.

*Government Orders*

• (1940)

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Chairman, I am honoured to have this opportunity to address food security in South Sudan and what Canada is doing to help get food to those who need it most. I want to speak to both the immediate humanitarian need for food and why food security and agriculture are the most viable long-term solutions to poverty and poor nutrition and a potential linchpin for the economy of South Sudan.

As some members may recall, South Sudan first gained independence on July 9, 2011, six months after the South Sudanese overwhelmingly voted in favour of seceding from Sudan through a peaceful referendum. However, this forced an uneasy peace in a country whose people were more familiar with responding to violence than with building stable futures for themselves and their children.

Improving food security is an important key to building a better and more peaceful future in the wake of the damage and destruction inflicted by 22 years of civil war, which claimed an estimated two million lives and left four million people without homes.

In December 2013, South Sudan was plunged into crisis yet again, this time as the result of ethnic and political tension within the new country. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that since December 2013, the conflict has forced more than one million people from their homes, including more than 800,000 people within South Sudan. An estimated 250,000 people have fled to the neighbouring countries of Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia.

At the time South Sudan separated from Sudan, its oil potential offered the prospect of a prosperous economic future that would benefit all, including the poor. However, too much dependence on oil for government revenues has proven to be a problem and the source of many tensions with neighbouring Sudan. For over a year, South Sudan ceased oil production, with severe consequences for the economy, including inflation.

Let me say what the people of South Sudan are up against. First, South Sudan is a new country, where the majority are young people. More than 70% of the population is under the age of 30. Their lives are a constant battle for survival in the face of impossible odds. The country has some of the worst development and humanitarian indicators in the world, with 90% of the country, nearly 11 million people, living below the national poverty line. Almost half of South Sudanese do not have enough to eat, and nearly a quarter of the population relies on food aid. This year, up to seven million people are likely to experience some form of food insecurity because of this crisis. Half the population does not have access to clean drinking water.

A majority of the country's people live in rural areas, and most households depend on small-scale crop farming or animal husbandry as their main sources of income. South Sudan's small-scale farmers lack access to credit and land because of the absence of laws on property rights and land tenure, which keeps them from expanding their production. Women, who provide most of the labour in agricultural production, are doubly disadvantaged because of gender inequality.

Although a remarkable 90% of the land in the country is suitable for farming, less than 5% of it is cultivated. In fact, South Sudan imports half of its food from neighbouring countries, chiefly Kenya and Uganda. Nevertheless, South Sudan has made significant development advances since the civil war between Sudan and South Sudan ended.

Over the last five years, food production has increased by 22%. Just before the conflict broke out in December 2013, national food security was the best it had been in over five years. These are some of the reasons the government of South Sudan is looking to agriculture to help it turn things around. The agriculture sector is still South Sudan's best option for economic growth and diversification. In the meantime, humanitarian assistance will continue to be needed and may increase because of the armed conflict, which has affected the normal planting season.

• (1945)

While Canada is concerned with the worsening humanitarian situation in South Sudan, we remain committed to South Sudan's development as a new country. Most of our development initiatives in South Sudan are ongoing, even though we certainly have had to adopt some of these because of the current conflict. In our programs in South Sudan, Canada's approach tries to balance humanitarian assistance for the immediate situation with the long-term development programs that focus primarily on food security and agriculture.

For maternal, newborn and child health, as well as advancing democracy, Canada is among the top bilateral donors to that country. In 2012-13, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development provided a total of \$84.9 million to South Sudan for development and humanitarian assistance.

Our main focus in food security includes building smallholder farms to meet immediate food security needs as well as initiating market access to improve livelihoods. Canada has particular expertise to offer in year-round farming of fruits, vegetables, as well as in the fisheries. All of these could help to bridge the current gap between growing seasons and feed the farmers as well as the rest of the population throughout the year.

At present, we are working through UN agencies such as the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations as well as Canadian NGOs like the Canadian Red Cross.

Through these organizations, Canada is supporting farmer training and providing agricultural supplies such as seeds and tools to communities so they can plant basic crops to boost food production, a dire need in the current crisis.

We are achieving good results. For example, support to the Canadian Red Cross has increased food production for 14,000 individuals in the eastern part of the state. One woman the project helped was recently awarded the title of "best farmer" in her state. We are really changing individual lives through Canadian assistance.

*Government Orders*

Despite these gains, food shortages and the displacement of more than one million people have placed South Sudan at risk of famine this year. To address this situation, on April 1, Canada announced funding of nearly \$25 million to address humanitarian needs arising from the current conflict. This funding is being used to help meet food, shelter, emergency medical care, safe drinking water and sanitation facilities and the protection of the most vulnerable people, especially refugees and displaced people.

In addition, Canada announced new funding of \$51.5 million to support food production and develop livelihoods, so South Sudanese could continue to produce food and work toward self-sufficiency. This will also make farmers more resilient in times of crisis. This funding includes support to both displaced populations and their host communities to help avert a potential famine as a result of the crisis.

It is hard for Canadians with all our highways to imagine, but South Sudan has only 300 kilometres of paved roads in the entire country. Through the World Food Programme's efforts, Canada is helping to build 140 kilometres of roads that will ease delivery of humanitarian assistance and help bring agricultural goods from farms to markets.

The WFP's activities will also build irrigation networks and food storage facilities, as well as meet the immediate food needs of up to 450,000 people through a food for work program. Already, Canadian support has helped WFP to reach 56,940 people through this program.

Our support will improve fisheries through the United Nations Industrial Development Organization's five-year program, which will help fish folk living along the Nile River, especially women, to increase their harvest and improve their livelihood.

Overall, Canada's food security projects are helping to diversify and increase the production of nutritious foods and expand agricultural opportunities in one of the poorest countries on earth. Although there are risks, the risk of doing nothing is even greater.

Through these investments, we are helping South Sudan to make the transition from aid dependence to self-sufficiency in the long term, while meeting the urgent food needs of the people of South Sudan.

● (1950)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the hon. member for his focus on food security. There is a looming malnutrition crisis. UNICEF is warning dangerous levels of malnutrition threaten one-quarter million children and unless they are urgently reached with treatment, up to 50,000 children under age five could die this year.

With the rainy season and the ongoing insecurity, travelling by road is nearly impossible, making delivery of aid by air the most secure but also very expensive. I am wondering will the government encourage other donors to step up their funding for South Sudan, respond to changing needs on the ground and call on all parties for unimpeded humanitarian access so humanitarian organizations can reach the children in need.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Chair, before I answer the question, as a member of Parliament from a relatively affluent community of Burlington, I have been told, in terms of grocery sales, that we are

one of the top per capita in the country. We have a tremendous amount of food and it is hard for me and people from my riding to understand the actual needs of other countries, including South Sudan.

I use what is happening in Africa, in South Sudan, as an example when I am asked by constituents why we send aid around the world when we have our own issues here. My point to them is that they have no idea what life is really like in other parts of the world and Canada has a responsibility to be there, in this case, as I indicated in my speech, with humanitarian aid and food security.

To the point of my colleague, Canada cannot do it alone. We need our partners from around the world, whether they are NGOs or other countries, to understand and deliver what is really needed on the ground so people have food security and other basic needs, so they can progress, make a difference and develop a new country. The other issues take a back seat to famine and health when there is no help. That is why we are helping and why we as a government have been encouraging others, and are going to continue to encourage others, to help the people from South Sudan.

● (1955)

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, one of the things I was so impressed with in South Sudan when I was there was the incredible amount of arable land. The opportunity is there for South Sudan to really be a self-sufficient country.

When I was there, I met a gentleman by the name of David Tepper. He is from Stratford, Ontario, a developer, who went over because he was told of some business opportunities in South Sudan in growing acacia berries. When he got there and saw what the land was like, he decided that he would, along with a group of people he knew from the Stratford area, develop some farmland. He is now cultivating thousands of acres of land just outside of Juba. He is growing wheat, which he is selling to the World Food Programme, which is, in turn, helping to feed many of the people in South Sudan.

Knowing that these opportunities are there, with the expertise that Canada has, does my colleague think there are other opportunities that we might pursue there to help a real economy begin in South Sudan that would give the people a real hope and a real future?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Chair, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development does a fantastic job in her responsibilities in that area and has a true understanding of some of the issues that face other countries around the world in her position.

*Government Orders*

I believe the point that the parliamentary secretary was making is this. For Canada and other NGOs, it is not all about sending money or sending food that is developed here or in other parts of the world and hoping it gets to the right people. As we know, there are difficulties in ensuring aid gets directly to those who actually need it.

The point is that we in this country, as do other countries, have tremendous expertise in making individuals, organizations, families and communities more self-sufficient, so they are able to provide for themselves. On the food security side, there is no better agriculture knowledge than what we have in Canada and we need to take that knowledge and expertise and apply it to those who really need it in other countries so they can become self-sufficient, rely on themselves, and reduce their dependency on the generosity of other nations to help them develop their own democracy and self-worth as a country.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to ask my colleague a question.

Unfortunately, in all conflicts, the most vulnerable individuals are children and women. Could the member tell me whether the Government of Canada will provide funding to address gender-based violence in South Sudan?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Chair, I would not disagree with the comment that in conflict it is often children, women and other vulnerable demographics that suffer greatly.

The concept of allocating resources to help those individuals is a very noble one and one I think all governments, including our government, does consider. Our Prime Minister has taken leadership on maternal health issues and a number of other areas. However, where the difficulty comes is how. It is easy to talk about and allocate, but how do we deliver it to make a difference and how do we make change? That is why it needs a comprehensive approach. That is what we are doing.

As was previously mentioned, we need other partners that want to make a difference on the ground for those vulnerable groups and suggestions that we can take up as a government. That is the kind of approach that is not partisan, that we can take from either side: are there ways to deliver to make a difference, not just to say we spent the money? That is the kind of approach we would like to take and the kind of input we like from the opposition, or whomever has the ideas that would make an actual difference on the ground for those vulnerable groups.

• (2000)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Chair, picking up on nutritional security again, this is from a joint agency food briefing, including CARE, Oxfam and World Vision. A 60-year-old man from Jonglei said:

I harvested four bags of sorghum in the last season...With my family...this could have lasted me about six months. I am hosting 4 IDP households...We finished the four bags....I have no other assets to sell to buy more food and I do not know what will happen between now and the next season.

This food crisis is very much a product of the conflict. It requires a bold response to stem the suffering of communities and to repair the fragile food security system. Will the government consider providing

additional funding to partners if the needs on the ground continue to increase? Famine is probable.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Chair, that is one of the issues we will be facing in the near future. The issue of a famine is real in South Sudan. It will not be just us, but all partners will have to look at it if the food security issue does worsen over the next number of months due to the crisis.

Let us hope the crisis comes to an end and we are able to provide other opportunities for self-sufficiency. However, if not, it is a fair question to ask the House and the agency whether we need to do more in South Sudan based on the circumstances of the day. The circumstances at present are that Canada is doing at least its share, if not more, of assistance to South Sudan in terms of food security. However, as we know in other parts of the world, as circumstances change due diligence has to be done by this government and governments around the world to make good decisions on what is right for that community, that country and the development of the world.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I guess it is a bit of double-edged sword to stand in this place today to speak to this situation. My point of discussion would be vigilance, the vigilance of observer countries of the west.

Recent history has given us plenty of reason to be vigilant. We are just now commemorating the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda. We have seen what has happened in Sri Lanka. We are seeing what is happening in CAR. We are seeing what is happening with D.R.C. and with Syria. What these things all have in common—and it will be the focus of my words today—is the use of sexual violence as a weapon, and the aftermath of that.

The signs that we missed in Rwanda and missed in Bosnia, the signs that we are seeing and have seen in Sri Lanka, the signs that we have seen and are seeing in Syria, we are beginning to see now in South Sudan.

The importance of vigilance by the west, by Canada and by observer countries, is paramount, because without that vigilance we allow the potential for something horrendous to happen. We contribute, although passively, to something that should not occur.

My concern is for the escalation of hostilities in South Sudan in the last number of week in regard to targeted violence based on ethnicity and based on gender. My concern is that we will not have the wherewithal to address this situation in a preventive manner, and it is over whether we will have the expertise and ability to deal with this situation in the aftermath.

I mentioned when I first stood that I am saddened to be standing in this place today, speaking to this issue, because one of the first trips I took as a member of Parliament was to South Sudan with my colleague from Newmarket. This was in January of 2012, so South Sudan was merely six or seven months old.



*Government Orders*

One of the things that struck us all on arriving in the capital of Juba was the fact that there was absolutely nothing in terms of infrastructure. There was absolutely no electricity unless one had a generator. Water was scarce in terms of being readily available. The airplane that landed us was a Boeing whatever, and it pretty well rolled right up to the door of the airport. We got off the plane and literally walked into waiting vehicles. The infrastructure was not there.

However, in the subsequent meetings that we had with individual parliamentarians and with representatives of the NGOs and the media, there was a sense of hope, in many cases, because of the desire and determination of the group of individuals that we met to build a Sudan that they could be proud of and that the world could be proud of.

● (2005)

It was a fragile hope, but it was a hope nonetheless, so to see what is happening in South Sudan today, slightly less than three years later, is disheartening. However, within that, I think we need to do the best we can as a friend of Sudan to make sure that we are there to help those individuals succeed in their desire to see Sudan succeed.

One of the ways we can do that is being there and being vigilant, especially in terms of the type of conflict this has the danger of turning into. There are reports that these recent targeted attacks were spurred on by radio announcements urging individuals to attack individuals from another tribe, individuals who did not see eye to eye with the overall communities they were in. I think the first attack claimed the lives of some 200 individuals, while a subsequent attack claimed the lives of another 40 individuals. This struck a chord with me, because that is the exact methodology that was used in the beginning of the Rwandan crisis.

We are now, 20 years later, seeing the aftermath of what happened in Rwanda. There are recent articles about interviews and discussions held some 20 years later with not only the victims of sexual violence but with the children born of these acts, describing how those relationships were affected. Mothers could not look at their daughters; children felt ostracized by their families and their communities. The support for those who suffered during this ethnic cleansing period does not extend to those children. They are left to their own devices in terms of finding help, whether they understand that they need or decide that they want help.

I will be repeating myself if I say that what I am hearing in the media now about the actions in South Sudan causes me great concern in terms of the direction that South Sudan may be going. We cannot look at these types of actions as offshoots of war. We cannot look at the tribal tensions in South Sudan as just things that happen. These tensions are at the core of the actions and the activities of the opposing forces in South Sudan, and they are used as a means of undermining the communities and the very society that these communities live in.

We in Canada must make sure that the past sins of the fathers are not visited on the young people. Youth make up over half of the population of South Sudan. I feel very strongly that we, as Canada and as the west, need to make sure that we send a clear sign that we are there to support those children and that the civilians in South

Sudan will have an opportunity to grow in safety and freedom and to find their feet so that they can move forward.

● (2010)

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, indeed, my colleague and I were on that same parliamentary delegation to South Sudan. In fact, Canada was the very first government that had a parliamentary delegation go to visit that country after it had established itself as an independent nation. We saw many of the same things, met the same people, and had conversations with the parliamentarians.

Canada has stepped forward and put forward money for humanitarian assistance. Sudan has been a country of focus for Canada, so a tremendous amount of money has already gone in there. It is one of the seven countries in Africa that we have chosen as countries of focus, so development money has been going in there.

Recently the Minister of International Development announced extra money. We have put \$25 million into humanitarian assistance and another \$51 million has gone in for further development projects.

My question for my colleague is this: as a foreign country, how do we find that happy balance between respecting the sovereignty of that nation and helping it to find the way forward? What are the areas where he thinks we might be able to give guidance through our development projects? Are there areas where he thinks that we should be inserting some pressure? Does he have any thoughts on that aspect?

● (2015)

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** Mr. Chair, yes, it is important that as our own nation we respect sovereignty of another nation.

In terms of what we can offer the Sudanese, I think our strength, first and foremost, is governance. It is providing our expertise in a consultative manner with respect to governance and trying to show that there are other motivations for governments, other than it is now my turn. This is something that, unfortunately, if my colleague remembers, was quite prevalent in the discussions that we had with parliamentarians.

It is by no means our responsibility or our job to go in and tell another country what it should or should not be doing, but I think it behooves us to lend our expertise in areas such as governance and food security, as another colleague brought up. Canada can support everything from maternal health and infant health to governance in terms of consultation, and Canada can provide financial support, if necessary, in certain areas as well.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for speaking tonight and for his caring.

According to Médecins Sans Frontières, medical care is under fire in South Sudan. MSF patients and staff have been attacked, and multiple facilities have been attacked and looted since the violence broke out in December 2013. Three MSF-supported hospitals have been completely ransacked and destroyed.

*Government Orders*

Most recently, at the Bentiu hospital just a few days ago, more than 30 people, including medical staff and patients, were killed. Patients were shot in their beds.

One patient in the Malakal hospital, a 59-year-old gentleman, said:

Every day, 10 to 15 men entered the hospital with guns.... They'd ask for cellphones and money. If you didn't give anything to them, they would shoot you.

MSF calls on all parties to the conflict to respect medical facilities and to allow patients to receive medical treatment, irrespective of their origin or ethnicity.

I wonder what my colleague thinks. Should the government be considering providing additional funding to humanitarian partners if the needs on the ground continue to change?

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** Mr. Chair, the member asked a significant question. As she stated in the preamble of her speech, the medical facilities are doing what they can to provide for the medical needs of the country's citizens and those activities are being thwarted by rebels.

Would putting more money into the medical needs of the community serve a purpose without being able to ensure that the medical aid will get to the communities that need it? We need to make sure that the support is maintained. We also need to work with our international partners to find a way to make sure that those services can be delivered safely, where individuals under medical care for whatever reason are protected by observer nations, be they of African origin or of western origin, and that the civilians be as protected as possible.

• (2020)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP):** Mr. Chair, since my colleague has been there and is familiar with the area, I have a question.

Similar conflicts are happening elsewhere, and in this case, the conflict is happening in one of the poorest countries on the planet, and yet opposing factions are firing on one another with extremely sophisticated weapons. They are using high-calibre sniper cartridges that cost \$4 or \$5 each, and the assault rifles cost thousands of dollars. They did not acquire them by selling goats or sacks of millet. Someone is supporting them, and major interests are at stake.

Should we not start by asking who is financing these conflicts and how weapons are entering the region? Should we not ask ourselves if perhaps they are even going through our country, since Canada has not signed the small arms treaty?

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** Mr. Chair, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

This issue of who is behind this conflict and who is financing it is a very complex and thorny one.

[*English*]

Our government has not as yet signed the small arms treaty and that is problematic, because it does create a situation where small arms are being funnelled into South Sudan to both sides of this conflict. It is something we need to take a look at ourselves in terms

of this treaty and we need to make sure that we can figure out who is financing the conflict.

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Chair, it is great to be here tonight. I join my colleagues in voicing serious concern over the situation in South Sudan and I welcome this opportunity to contribute to the deliberations today in the House by focusing particularly on the security dimension.

The violence that exploded in December 2013 continues to ravage the communities of South Sudan. While it is difficult to estimate the casualties with confidence due to the continuing access issues, a reporting indicates that between 10,000 and 40,000 people have been killed just since December. More than one million people have been displaced. Tens of thousands of citizens, desperate and terrified, have camped out at UN bases seeking protection.

To be honest, the UN mission in South Sudan, UNMISS, has struggled to respond and to meet the basic needs of those seeking refuge and has provided what it can in terms of aid needed to survive and has actually contributed to saving countless lives. UNMISS was not prepared nor resourced for such a large-scale crisis, and reinforcements and support are still needed.

The UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan was created the same day as South Sudan itself on July 9, 2011. Although there had been previously a UN peacekeeping mission in Sudan, it had been focused on supporting the implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement between north and south Sudan.

The new country of South Sudan required a different kind of support from the international community. UNMISS took on the responsibility of supporting the consolidation of peace, assisting the government of South Sudan with preventing conflict and protecting civilians and also helping to establish the rule of law. The Security Council authorized the mission to use force when required, especially if it was necessary to protect civilians from attack.

The July 2011 separation from Sudan was relatively peaceful following decades of conflict. However, it soon became clear that independence itself would not automatically deliver the hoped-for security gains across South Sudan. A legacy of decades of conflict included a highly militarized society, fragmented communities, weak institutions, and an underdeveloped and very vulnerable economy. It was well understood by international partners that the stabilization and development of South Sudan would be a formidable task and that the society was still fragile, with simmering ethnic tensions under the surface, with power vacuums, and with shifting political alliances. However, the scale and the ferocity of the outbreak of conflict last December took everyone by surprise.

*Government Orders*

In response to the spiralling security situation in December 2013, the UN Security Council authorized an increase to the size of the UN force from about 8,000 to almost 14,000 personnel. The cessation of hostilities briefly agreed to in January is not being respected by either side, and clashes between government forces and rebels continue. Civilians remain vulnerable and in desperate need of protection. As recently as the Easter weekend, reported up to 1,500 civilians were brutally killed in Bentiu when opposition forces took control of the city. My colleague was just talking about the attacks on the hospital there. Many were targeted, specifically for their ethnicity, driving an additional 20,000 people to seek refuge and the protection of civilian camps there.

As a security situation, South Sudan has eroded, and so has the relationship between the government of South Sudan and UNMISS. UN bases have been attacked, UN personnel harassed. This situation is utterly unacceptable. UNMISS is routinely blocked from accessing people in need by both government and rebel forces. The South Sudanese government has falsely accused the mission of supporting and supplying rebels. Throughout this, UNMISS has repeatedly underscored its neutrality in the conflict and has done all it can to implement its primary goal of protecting the civilian population.

On April 17, an attack on civilians and United Nations personnel at UNMISS in Bor resulted in a reported 58 people killed and over 100 wounded. If it had not been for the interventions of the UNMISS peacekeepers, more than 5,000 displaced persons housed at the camp would likely have met a similar fate.

UNMISS personnel have time and again stepped up in their mandate to protect those most at risk of violence. I would like to take some time to pay special tribute to the two Indian soldiers who were killed while protecting the UN base at Akobo in December, and to the five Indian soldiers who gave their lives last April when they were ambushed while protecting a humanitarian convoy.

Canada's engagement in South Sudan focuses on helping set the conditions for long-term peace and stability. To this end, we have been a supporter of UNMISS since its inception in 2011.

● (2025)

We currently have 12 Canadian Armed Forces personnel deployed to the mission. CAF personnel occupy positions in the mission's headquarters. They provide key advice on intelligence, on military planning, on logistics, and on military liaison. Both CAF and RCMP personnel were also part of its predecessor, the first UN mission in Sudan from 2005 to 2011. Through its office in Juba, Canada has worked closely with UNMISS leadership, including the Special Representative of UN Secretary-General, Hilde Johnson. Canada is also a major financial contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget. It has provided over \$27 million in assessed contributions to UNMISS in the past fiscal year.

It is critical that the international community stand behind the people of South Sudan at this difficult time and that we demonstrate our unwavering support for a peaceful solution. Canada, along with key like-minded partners in South Sudan, supports UNMISS and its work on behalf of the international community for the people of South Sudan. We also condemn the continued obstruction of UNMISS operations by government and opposition forces, as well

as any threats or harassment toward UNMISS personnel. Canada, along with its international partners, has strenuously condemned the violations and the abuses of human rights and the violations of international humanitarian law perpetuated during this conflict. Finally, Canada continues to call for the lives of civilians to be protected, including those seeking refuge from violence at UN bases.

We call on all parties to facilitate the work of UNMISS and to provide unhindered access to humanitarian workers. The Government of Canada takes very seriously the protection of civilians during humanitarian emergencies, including the specific protection needs of women and children, the elderly, religious minorities, and other particularly vulnerable groups. To this end, we continue to forcefully advocate for stronger civilian protection measures at the UN on issues such as the protection of medical personnel and assets, the safety and security of humanitarian workers, and we recognize the vulnerability of certain populations in conflict situations.

To date, in 2014, Canada has committed more than \$24.8 million in humanitarian assistance to South Sudan through a number of key organizations on the ground. Canada's permanent representative to the UN urged the UN in December to work more effectively to protect and to better meet the needs of vulnerable populations, including religious minorities. This includes working to prevent and respond to sexual violence in humanitarian emergencies and ending the scourge of child, early, and forced marriage.

Canada has frequently called for perpetrators of violence in South Sudan to be brought to justice, for all parties to the conflict to exercise restraint and to participate actively in peace negotiations, and for the international community to increase efforts to improve the humanitarian and security situation in the country.

Canada also supports the High Commissioner for Refugees through \$3 million in funding to provide assistance to conflict-affected displaced women and girls, who are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. It also provides specific protection activities for displaced children in internally displaced sites, as well as in the refugee camps. Canadian support of \$2.5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross is helping to provide protection services to the survivors of sexual violence throughout South Sudan, as well as the reunification of minors with their families. Another \$2 million of Canadian support through the International Organization for Migration is helping them work in conjunction with the ICRC to reunite separated family members by ensuring that all internally displaced people seeking protection in UN bases are registered.

*Government Orders*

Canada is doing its utmost to promote the principles behind the protection of civilians in South Sudan and around the globe. The Government of Sudan needs to do more to ensure that UNMISS, its bases, and its personnel are not vilified, and that they are enabled in their capacity to protect civilians caught in harm's way. Both sides of the conflict need to do more to immediately cease the deliberate targeting of civilians, tone down their rhetoric, and work toward a peaceful solution so that civilians no longer have to fear for their safety. As recent events demonstrate, UNMISS is under constant threat, exemplifying the need for the Government of Sudan to publicly support the work of the mission, to respect the work of UNMISS personnel and, most importantly, to step up to their responsibility and ensure the safety of their own citizens.

To conclude, the UN needs to move more quickly to bring in more troops to support the mission, and the international community must show its full support for the protection of civilians in South Sudan. Civilians must never be targeted as they are today in South Sudan, in violation of all civilized norms.

• (2030)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, again, I would like to thank my hon. colleague and everyone taking part in this debate tonight, for raising this important issue on the national stage. We have to continue to do it on the international stage.

Will the government send a high-level government representative to South Sudan, in coordination with other international actors, as part of a delegation to demonstrate that Canada is seriously watching this situation and will not accept the status quo?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, I can reassure my colleague opposite that we have been paying attention to the situation. This is not something we have been ignoring.

I have here four press releases that have been done. Our government is directly engaged. Our parliamentary secretary has stepped forward to deplore the attacks that have taken place in South Sudan. Our minister has stepped forward as well to condemn the attacks that took place at UN camps. We have press releases explaining the contributions we are making in terms of international development and the like.

Therefore, the member opposite can be assured that this is an important issue to our government and that we continue to pay attention to what is going on there, continue to make our contribution, and continue to try to work with the international community to find a resolution to an extremely difficult situation.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his very interesting and informative speech.

[*English*]

First, I think we all agree that in the relatively short term we need to work on the real emergency we are facing here, but also we need to work in the longer term both on the peace process and for development in the longer term.

My colleague mentioned the issue of weak institutions. I wonder what he thinks Canada could do to help build stronger institutions in South Sudan, working in particular with the diaspora here in Canada,

which often has a lot of expertise and knowledge on the ground that it can bring to bear, and what more Canada could do to support the peace process.

• (2035)

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, my colleague opposite is well aware of some of the causes of the conflict in South Sudan and how some of the roots of this go back many years and are deep seated between particular people. She is wise to suggest that we need to take a look at the longer term as well, trying to find what we can do to make sure that, when there is a resolution to this, it is a long-term resolution.

We all want South Sudan to succeed. South Sudan has been established because there was a desire that the people of South Sudan would finally have peace, would have the kind of governance they deserve, and would have the institutional strength and capacity to begin to participate in the world economy.

There are a few things we need to do.

One issue is that every person in South Sudan needs to have some opportunity to participate in and to influence the direction of the nation. That is a big statement to make, but certainly when we feel we have an equal share and are participating in our country we are far more likely to get involved in trying to solve the problems we have in our country.

Second, a peace agreement really needs to learn from some of the other examples we have seen and to certainly be inclusive to try to bring peace to the entire country, not just to reflect the demands of a certain number of people but to try to include all citizens, all people groups, and all ethnic groups in that as well.

Third, typically in these situations we need a comprehensive reconciliation process as well. Canada has participated in the past in the establishment of some of the institutions that bring those kinds of things about.

We can help with this situation, but there is first a need to deal immediately with the violence that is taking place and try to bring a real ceasefire to the country, so we can begin to discuss some of these other things.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, just to follow up on the question that was asked by my colleague across the way with respect to long-term contributions, one of the projects that Canada has participated in is a \$20 million project to help democratic governance. It is divided into a number of sections: democratic governance, private sector developments, strengthening basic education, environmental education and training, peace and security, and social welfare services.

I would like to focus on the whole area of education, because I think that is a long-term piece that Canada can help with. I wonder if my colleague has any thoughts on how Canada can be involved in education in South Sudan to help the youth, because we know it is a very young population. Is there any way Canada can help with moving education forward?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, we have an obligation to try to do what we can. I would back up one step before that, and this was addressed in the last question as well. That is the necessity to try to find some sort of a short- and medium-term solution and cessation of hostilities as best we can, so we can begin to put in place some of the institutions that need to be in place if we are going to bring education and health care to the population of South Sudan. We know this is a huge challenge.

One of the things we are trying to do is work with international organizations and agencies, which can provide some of that stability. We have partnered with a number of international partners such as the Canadian Red Cross. World University Services is one of those institutions that would be certainly geared toward trying to find educational opportunities and development. The University of Calgary, from western Canada, is involved with us in partnerships as well and World Vision Canada. Those are a few of the organizations that the Government of Canada is already partnered with in order to try to bring some peace and stability, some of the educational opportunities, and also some of the health provisions that the people in that area so desperately need.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague across the way for his remarks.

We in the NDP support the people of South Sudan. I think I can speak for most of my colleagues in the House when I say that we are extremely concerned about the humanitarian crisis and the violence that the people of South Sudan are being forced to endure at this time.

Last April, the Conservative government announced a contribution of \$24.85 million for humanitarian assistance for South Sudan, and we welcomed that commitment.

Can my colleague across the aisle confirm that that money has been turned over entirely to our partners in South Sudan? What does the government plan to do about long-term assistance for South Sudan?

• (2040)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, one of the challenges here is trying to deal with the short term, prior to dealing with the medium and long term. We have made our commitments, as the member mentioned. We have also made additional commitments, but we are also finding ourselves in the situation where there may be a huge food shortage in the short term; so it makes it very difficult in this situation to try to begin to address the longer-term challenges that the country of South Sudan has, when the crisis and the conflict is causing so many larger short-term problems as well.

As the member pointed out, we have made a commitment of \$25 million to our humanitarian partners. I mentioned some of those partners a few minutes ago. Those are folks who are already operating on the ground. That is emergency assistance, but beyond that we have also provided another \$50 million to help them address some of the longer-term food security and livelihood needs, which we anticipate and hope will begin to alleviate that potential problem of food shortages over this summer.

We are trying to deal with this on a number of levels: deal with the short term, deal with the medium term, but then also take a look at the longer term and ask how we can contribute in the best way to the institutional strength of South Sudan, so that when this immediate emergency is over, it will be stronger and able to move on from there.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Chair, this evening, I would like to add my voice to those of my colleagues from all parties the House in expressing both our great concern about the crisis that is presently gripping South Sudan and, of course, our unconditional support for its people.

This evening's debate is very sad and troubling. I have had the opportunity to hear my colleagues from different parties express their views on the situation. The message from all parties in the House is very clear: we have a responsibility to act. We have a responsibility as members of the international community and as human beings to come to the aid of the people of South Sudan. That is what this evening is really about.

The situation is happening far away from us. It may seem very distant, but it is impossible to remain unmoved by the atrocities reported to us by the media and by people with links to those still living in South Sudan.

Before starting my own speech, I would like to take a moment to thank my colleague from Jeanne-Le Ber for his presentation earlier. His speech was full of compassion, and he specifically recalled the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide that is being commemorated this year. I found that comparison very appropriate.

Among other things, he mentioned our duty to be vigilant. With the terrible conflict in Rwanda, we came to realize the impact that much quicker intervention on the part of the international community could have had. We learned some lessons from that conflict that we should use today to come to the assistance of the people of South Sudan, who really need us to do so.

I represent the constituency of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, where the forces base at Valcartier is located. That is one of the places where General Roméo Dallaire worked and continues to work. Partisan questions aside, I feel that each of us has been touched by his account of the tragic events that he witnessed, by his desire to provide assistance, while having his hands tied and being powerless. It troubled and affected us all. All around Quebec City, and in my constituency in particular, we have been especially affected by General Dallaire's distinguished presence. In addition, all Canadians were touched and gripped by the atrocities that were perpetrated in Rwanda.

It is in that context that I want to address what is presently going on in South Sudan. Unfortunately, some parallels can be drawn between what is happening at the moment in that new country and what went on in Rwanda. It is very unfortunate and very disturbing for each of us here.

*Government Orders*

The current situation in this country developed after a very long conflict that had been going on for several years, which led to the referendum to declare independence and the creation of South Sudan. In 2011, close to 99% of the voters voted in favour of independence. There was a clear desire for self-determination by this people, which took action to create a country for itself. There was new hope that the people would finally be able to live together as a people and have the institutions they wanted.

Unfortunately, the situation has taken a turn. On December 15, 2013, violence really erupted in South Sudan between pro-government forces, who remain loyal to President Salva Kiir, and the soldiers who support the former vice-president. That is when things began. Unfortunately, there are reports of ethnic massacres in the conflict. In other words, some people are being targeted directly because of their ethnicity.

Since the conflict began, thousands of people have reportedly died. The UN is investigating possible violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Civilians have been attacked and civilians and peacekeepers have been killed.

● (2045)

There are reports of population displacements and gender-based sexual violence. There are places where rape is used as a weapon of war. Frankly, this situation is appalling.

Here in Canada, cases of sexual abuse and sexual harassment were recently uncovered in the Canadian Armed Forces and an inquiry was launched immediately. Action was taken swiftly. Everyone was deeply disturbed to hear that such things were happening here in Canada. When rape and abuse of women are systematically used as weapons of war, we cannot remain indifferent. We have the duty not only to act, but to act quickly.

The violence has escalated significantly over the past two weeks. Hundreds of civilians were targeted at the UN bases where they sought refuge, just because they belonged to a certain ethnic group. Just a few days later, there was another violent attack against civilians at another UN base, where more than 40 people were killed and many others were injured. We are talking about potential war crimes, but there needs to be an investigation to determine whether that is the case. The facts are disturbing, and by all accounts these do indeed seem to be war crimes.

Since the beginning of the conflict, more than one million people have fled their homes. I have heard a number of members talk about the youth of the South Sudan people. Indeed, large part of the population is under 30 and there are quite a lot of children. Many of them are separated from their families, are abandoned and have no resources. There are already some 68,000 refugees in UN bases. That is an approximate number, but the numbers are huge nonetheless. The UN bases where they are trying to accommodate these people and help them were not designed to host so many refugees and to provide essential services and assistance. The facilities are overcrowded and the basic services are rudimentary. With so many people and so few resources there is an increased risk of diseases being spread. There are different problems in refugee camps, so the UN bases have become refugee camps. The UN estimates that 4.9 million people from South Sudan are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance.

Because the camps are isolated and spread out, the UN says that it is difficult to reach many of the people affected by the conflict in South Sudan.

As was mentioned earlier, this is a very young country. It has had little time to develop its infrastructure. There are few paved roads, which makes it very difficult to reach people who are scattered across the country and to provide the resources and help they need. The rainy season is approaching, which is something else that could cause problems and delay the arrival of assistance.

Many members have mentioned the risk of famine. A number of farmers have been displaced. If they are still on their land, it is impossible for them to plant crops and to provide some sort of sustainment. Given this situation, we must act quickly. Canada has a responsibility. The government made a commitment. Members of the NDP were pleased to hear that \$24.85 million has been promised. We have been calling for that assistance for a long time and we are pleased to see the government taking action.

I feel we need to do more. There are clear needs, and we need to help the people of South Sudan develop democratic institutions that will help prevent these types of situations. The culture of democracy needs to be developed. As members of the international community and as people who are lucky enough to live in a privileged country, we do not experience these types of situations. We have a responsibility to help these people and offer them Canada's resources.

● (2050)

We are therefore asking the government to continue supporting the international community's efforts and to act quickly to prevent the conflict from getting worse and to help the victims, who are, unfortunately, often unprepared women and children.

[English]

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I listened to my colleague very carefully. I want to assure her that the money which was designated on April 1 by the Minister of International Development, indeed \$24.85 million in humanitarian assistance, has been distributed: the United Nations World Food Programme, \$11 million; the UN High Commission for Refugees, \$3 million; Red Cross, \$2.5 million; International Organization for Migration, \$2 million; the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, \$500,000; UN Humanitarian Air Service, \$2 million; World Relief Canada, \$1.5 million; Médecins Sans Frontières Canada, \$1 million; and World Vision Canada, \$1.35 million.

That money went out the door on April 1 because our government pays what it pledges. That is our reputation. The member has called on the government to provide even more money. Does she have a figure in mind that we should be considering?

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Mr. Chair, I would like to begin my thanking my colleague for providing those details. We needed to hear that information. We needed to hear that there is more to this than just empty promises, that the money is currently being distributed to competent partners who are already on the ground. That is good news. I would like to thank the member for sharing that information with the House, and I would like to thank the government for finally responding to the various requests from society and members of the House to help the people of South Sudan. It is a necessary step that is greatly appreciated.

As for additional aid, the issue is worth discussing in other debates. We need to assess the areas of need, and we should start by looking at the effectiveness of the aid currently being distributed. There are certainly other needs, and Canada will continue to be called on for assistance. We may be asking a lot of our citizens, but this is our responsibility because we are so privileged.

Earlier, a Conservative member said that some of his constituents did not really like the idea of sending Canadian money abroad. He gave them a good answer, which was that we do not really know what the situation is like in other countries, we do not know how difficult it can be, and we have a responsibility.

That was from a government member. I hope that message will come not only from an MP and that the government will step up to meet other needs and other appeals from the international community, regardless of the constraints. We have a responsibility to do that.

We have to work together to figure out how much we can give, but we do have a responsibility to help that country. The federal government's investment is much appreciated. However, if there are other needs, we will be asked to respond.

● (2055)

[English]

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for her passionate speech.

I want to talk about the recent violence in Bentiu. Initially the United Nations reported 200 had been killed, and now it is 400. Beyond the horrendous loss of life, there are real implications for humanitarian aid.

There has been a rapid influx of civilians into the base, 21,000 civilians seeking refuge in just 48 hours. The increase in violence is causing significant protection risks for civilians with reports of them being targeted and causing further displacement. Many children have been lost or separated from family members, so they are particularly vulnerable. Women and girls are vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence.

There is serious overcrowding in these bases, these sites. There is competition for shelter, child-friendly spaces, life-saving assistance, and increased risk of disease and infection.

Does the member think that now is the time for Canada to step up the political pressure and investments in South Sudan to avoid a human catastrophe?

[Translation]

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent question, which is related to my comments in response to my government colleague.

Canada has a responsibility to help people in need. In addition to providing financial and material resources, we can also take action on political and diplomatic fronts. We have to act quickly and put pressure on South Sudanese authorities to ensure that action is taken and that peace negotiations resume.

The ideal solution would be a negotiated peace. Armed intervention is not necessarily the best solution, but negotiation requires willingness on the part of the parties to go to the table, sit down and start over. I think the onus is on Canada to use its diplomatic influence to try to include women and members of civil society in the negotiation process to achieve a peace agreement that is good for everyone.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for her very emotional speech.

She mentioned the youth of the South Sudanese people and Canada's ability to exert diplomatic pressure.

With regard to the youth, especially children, according to UNICEF, 50,000 children under the age of five could die this year as a result of illness, malnutrition and unsafe conditions. UNICEF received only 50% of the funding requested, which it needs to save lives in South Sudan.

Canada has given money, but this situation is dragging on. We will have to continue assessing it.

Does my colleague believe that Canada should also show leadership by pushing other countries to help resolve this situation?

● (2100)

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for the excellent question, which shows her experience in international relations. We can also see that she is very knowledgeable about this subject.

I think she is quite right in saying that Canada could have a leadership role. It could bring other countries to the table so that they could make a direct contribution by providing UNICEF with the money it needs. This request for money is not to be taken lightly as the funds will be used to address a major humanitarian crisis.

As for the number of children that could die this year, that is horrible, absolutely horrible. When we hear figures like that, I do not see how we can say that we have spent enough, given enough, tried enough, and that it is over and it is up to others to continue. I believe that our responsibility does not end there. As I mentioned earlier, it may seem difficult sometimes for people to understand, but we really do have a responsibility as members of the international community.

*Government Orders*

We have the power to negotiate with our international partners with whom we already have economic, cultural and other ties. We can use our connections to get people to contribute if they have not already done so, or to contribute more if they have already committed to giving a certain amount. The work in South Sudan has just begun for the international community. The international community has been very involved and has put in a lot of effort, but there is still much to be done. We cannot rest on our laurels and be satisfied with the money, time and resources that have already been invested. For that, every country in the world will have to work together and make a firm commitment.

[English]

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I rise tonight to join my colleagues in speaking about the plight of the people in South Sudan. My speech will focus primarily on Canada's maternal, newborn, and child health programming and how that programming is helping the good people of South Sudan.

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan is of deep concern to Canada and to Canadians. The widespread fighting has taken a terrible toll. From 10,000 to 40,000 people have been killed, and more than one million have been forced out of their homes.

This crisis was triggered by a dispute between the president and his former vice-president and between ethnic Nuer and Dinka members of the presidential guard.

The plight of the South Sudanese people demands and deserves immediate attention, and that is why the Government of Canada recently announced nearly \$25 million in additional funding. These funds will alleviate the humanitarian crisis with the provision of food, shelter, emergency medical care, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, and protection.

We need partners to help effectively, and so I applaud all of the international efforts and the spirit of co-operation that has emerged among donor nations in this particular instance.

As my hon. colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, stated earlier in this House, Canada pays what it pledges, and we encourage our partners to do the same.

In addressing this urgent, high-profile crisis, we must not forget that South Sudan's instability is the result of more deep-rooted problems. A devastating civil war has shattered lives, institutions, and infrastructure. The lingering tensions among ethnic groups have threatened peace and security and advances in gender equality.

We must not lose sight of the long-term impact, as well. Canada is working to improve South Sudan's sustainable development, particularly through our leadership in maternal, newborn, and child health.

South Sudan's health system is weak. This is in part due to the devastation of decades of war but also due to the lack of public facilities and trained professionals. This means inadequate or non-existent services for mothers. According to the United Nations, a 15-year-old South Sudanese girl has a greater chance of dying from pregnancy-related causes than of finishing secondary school, and this begins a vicious circle. Mothers who do not have access to

adequate nutrition or prenatal care are less likely to deliver healthy children. Children who do not get proper nutrition and vaccinations in their earliest years are less likely to become healthy and productive adults. The gateway to sustainable development begins here.

That is why maternal, newborn, and child health has been a priority in Canada since the Prime Minister co-led the Muskoka initiative in 2010. Maternal, newborn, and child health is Canada's leading development priority. Before the Prime Minister drew attention to this important issue, the world was falling short on reducing child mortality and curbing maternal death. Thanks to the Muskoka initiative and subsequent global action, maternal mortality rates are declining, and millions more children are celebrating their fifth birthdays.

Our common goal has not yet been reached, but it is within arm's reach. That is why the Prime Minister is once again taking action to mobilize the world. Canada will host the high-level summit in maternal, newborn, and child health from May 28-30, 2014, right here in our own country, in Toronto. Together we can eliminate preventable deaths among children, women, and newborns, and we can save millions of lives that hang in the balance.

Canada has a track record of results, because we have taken a pragmatic approach focused on results. South Sudan is one of Canada's priority Muskoka initiative countries.

● (2105)

Despite the interruptions and required adaptations, our investments are yielding results in South Sudan. These are crucial to the long-term stability and prosperity of the country.

Most of our programming is devoted to strengthening health systems and focuses on three primary areas: safer deliveries through improved emergency, obstetric, and newborn care; training of health workers, particularly midwives; and the provision of basic maternal, newborn, and child health services at primary health care facilities.

Several of the Canadian-supported initiatives deliver results in more than one of these areas. For example, in partnership with the World Health Organization, Canada funded the building of a new maternity ward in a state hospital in South Sudan. It is now fully operational. Wards in two other state hospitals will be completed in the coming weeks. Through this project, 1,113 women have delivered babies safely at one of the hospitals. This has created an increase of 27% in safe deliveries over the previous year. Over 200 hospital staff have received training in obstetrics and gynecology. This has improved their ability to provide emergency health services to women giving birth.



*Government Orders*

Canadian-supported initiatives have also made great progress in training and deploying midwives. Through the United Nations population fund, Canada committed \$10.6 million to deploy 29 UN midwives from other countries to help facilities in all 10 states of South Sudan is becoming a reality. This will increase access to qualified midwives, reduce maternal and newborn deaths, and provide mentoring for South Sudanese midwifery students.

The results in the first year of this initiative are impressive. More than 33,000 pregnant women have received prenatal care. There have been more than 8,300 deliveries. There have been 525 health workers trained, and over 300 midwifery and nursing students have received clinical instruction and guidance.

Canada also committed \$19 million to make four national health training institutes for midwifery and nursing in South Sudan operational. Currently over 200 midwifery and nursery students are enrolled and are studying at these institutes. The first group of 17 midwives and 13 nurses graduated in the summer of 2013. These midwives provide safe delivery, prenatal care, and clinical services, such as psychological counselling and medical examinations for survivors of rape.

In such a difficult environment, these successes are important to highlight. It is important to show results. It is important to remember that when we say maternal, newborn, and child health, we are talking about saving the lives of mothers and children.

Canada will continue working with our partners and supporting initiatives like the health pooled fund, a multi-donor fund that works with NGOs and county health departments to increase access to and quality of health services. This initiative targets children, pregnant women, and other vulnerable groups. Health service coverage is increasing through the support of the fund.

Canada is playing a leadership role in South Sudan and around the world when it comes to saving the lives of mothers and children. All Canadians can be proud of our government's record in this important area. Canadians should also be proud of the progress that has been achieved.

Naturally, the difficult environment makes it very difficult to achieve results in South Sudan. However, we are working closely with our partners already on the ground. We are continually reassessing risks, and we continue to adapt our programs to ensure that our investments deliver results for those in need.

Canada supports a peaceful resolution to the current conflict, one that will enable South Sudan to continue on its path to sustainable development.

• (2110)

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, when I was in South Sudan we took a flight from Juba to a city called Wau, which is about 200 kilometres south of the border between northern Sudan and South Sudan. In the area outside of the city we visited several of the projects that Canada has invested in. I saw these little girls, ages 12 to 14, who were carrying little ones on their hips. Because I thought it was not possible that they were mothers, I asked, "Is this your brother or sister?" These little girls looked at me with aghast eyes and said, "No, this is my baby".

We know that very many young girls in South Sudan become pregnant at a very young age and we know the challenges it presents when there is no health care facility in the area and no one to provide guidance, whether for a difficult pregnancy or a challenging birth. Many of these young girls lose their lives because there is no assistance.

I wonder if my colleague could comment again on the value of what our focus on maternal, newborn, and child health is doing to help young girls in areas like South Sudan, outside the city of Wau, by helping them to have safe, live births for their babies and to have the health care they need.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Mr. Chair, before I respond to the question, let me just say how proud I am of my colleague, the hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, for the focus that she has given to this specific issue and particularly for the attention and dedication that she continues on a daily basis, focusing not only on South Sudan but also on many other countries, particularly in Africa, that need our help and assistance. I know she travels quite often to the area, and often to areas of the world that are not the safest. They do not have the services that we are used to here in Canada, but she does it with such passion and such love that she is to be commended. I want to thank her very much for her service to our country and for her service to the people who are really in need in those countries that she visits and frequents so often.

South Sudan continues to be one of Canada's priority countries as identified in the Muskoka initiative. In response to the hon. member's question, here are some of the recent results we have seen in the maternal, newborn, and child health area.

In partnership with the World Health Organization, Canada funded the launch of a new maternity ward at a state hospital in South Sudan. The number of safe deliveries at the hospital increased by 27% compared to the previous year, and 1,113 women have delivered their newborns safely since the beginning of that particular project.

In partnership again with the World Health Organization, Canada helped eliminate hospital user fees of about \$15 per birth in Jonglei State.

In partnership with the United Nations Population Fund, 29 international midwives have been recruited and deployed to provide urgently needed maternal and newborn health services at hospitals and primary health care centres throughout South Sudan. Four national health training institutes for midwifery and nursing have become operational in South Sudan. Over 33,000 pregnant women have received prenatal care. Over 8,300 pregnant women delivered their babies in facilities across South Sudan. Since the crisis, international midwives have also provided safe deliveries to over 50 women, and over 300 pregnant women have accessed prenatal care services at the protection of civilians sites and one of the communities hosting many internally displaced persons.

*Government Orders*

Five hundred and twenty-five health workers have been trained on sexual and reproductive health, emergency obstetric care, and midwifery skills across South Sudan. Over 300 midwifery and nursing students have received clinical instruction and guidance from international midwives.

• (2115)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to acknowledge that there are people here tonight who are hurting because their families are back home and they are scared. I would like to acknowledge the Canadians who are watching and worried about their families.

I have asked a number of questions tonight. I have asked about responsibility to protect. I have asked about the UN mission. I have asked about humanitarian aid. I have asked about the coming famine. I am not getting answers.

I am going to ask a very short question. Will the government support a more robust role for the United Nations' mission in the Republic of South Sudan as the mission's mandate is being reviewed?

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for Etobicoke North for her passion and the feeling with which she has so eloquently and passionately asked her questions and positioned herself on this specific issue. It is obvious that she cares a lot about the good people of South Sudan. I, too, want to acknowledge the Sudanese people who are here with us today, as well as the Canadians watching across the country.

In response to the question, our government, Canada, will continue to work very closely with our partners around the world to ensure that the aid we are providing reaches the people who need it the most. We will continue to monitor the situation to see what else can be done moving forward.

• (2120)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Chair, since we began this debate on the situation in South Sudan, we have spoken about humanitarian aid, additional assistance and ways of making that country safe as soon as possible. We also spoke about support for establishing peace in that young country and many other things, since tragedies and, unfortunately, genocides often occur in Africa.

What will the government do to ensure that resources are given to help the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan monitor human rights and investigate the violations that have occurred, particularly in relation to the recent incident in Bentiu, in order to prevent other atrocities and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice?

Recently, the United States used the term “abomination” to describe situation, and that speaks volumes about the degree of violence that is occurring in this young country.

[*English*]

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Mr. Chair, the simple answer to the question is that Canada will continue to provide humanitarian assistance on the basis of the needs of South Sudan through its international humanitarian assistance bureau. There is a litany of

things we have heard tonight, a whole list of support that Canadians have given the good people of South Sudan and will continue to provide for them. As I said, we will continue to work with our partners around the world. We will continue to monitor the situation. It is a priority for our government.

I applaud all members who are showing their interest by being here tonight and speaking on this very important issue.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, it is with great urgency that we are gathered in this House this evening, as expressed in the very moving submissions that we have heard. I want to commend the member for Etobicoke North for her initiative and her sustained participation in this debate.

I have listened with great interest to my colleagues on all sides of the House and the graphic accounts of the savagery and brutalization endured by the civilian population in South Sudan. One must never forget that behind each person, behind the statistics there is a name, there is a life, there is a story.

The urgent plight of South Sudan is perhaps best summed up by Eric Reeves, who put it as follows, in an article published just today:

...no civilians in the world are in greater danger than those of South Sudan. Not in Syria, Central African Republic, or Darfur is the threat of targeting on the basis of identity so immediate as it is for certain ethnic groups in vulnerable areas of South Sudan. Given the lack of protection by Juba government forces, the inability of UN troops to protect large numbers of people, and the absence of significantly greater protection from the broader international community, hundreds of thousands of people are likely to die in the coming months, whether directly through targeted violence or indirectly through hunger. It is an unsurpassably urgent crisis and yet the world's response has been in no way comparable to the threats civilians now face on a daily basis.

It is the issue of response that I seek to address.

I must note that this debate occurs at a particularly important historical juncture, for we meet in the aftermath of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Mass Atrocities, which we commemorated last week, the remembrance of horrors too terrible to be believed but not too terrible to have happened, of the struggle against mass atrocities wherever they are occurring, including, also, the unthinkable, unspeakable, ultimate crime against humanity whose name we should even shudder to mention: genocide.

As well, we meet at a historic moment of remembrance and reminder: the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust of Hungarian Jews, where some 430,000 Hungarian Jews were deported in cattle trains to the death camps in Auschwitz in six weeks.

I raise this, not to draw comparisons between the situation in South Sudan and the Holocaust. There are no comparisons or analogies to be made here. Rather, I have just returned, today, from a moving and painful visit to Hungary and Poland on the occasion of Holocaust Remembrance Day. At Auschwitz, I had the honour to light a memorial torch with the great-niece of the Swedish diplomat and Canada's first honorary citizen Raoul Wallenberg, a hero of humanity, a person who showed how one man, with the compassion to care and the courage to act, can transform history.

*Government Orders*

As part of Yom HaShoah, we mourned those who perished as we paid tribute to the survivors among us. With them, we said, “Never again will we be silent in the face of evil; never again will we be indifferent to racism and anti-Semitism; never again will we be bystanders to hate or to the pain of the vulnerable.”

And as we stated this here in the House yesterday, as well.

However, what remains so tragic, and this is the theme of my remarks this evening, is that we have failed to learn the lessons of the Holocaust. We have failed to learn the lessons of the Rwandan and Darfur genocides. We have failed to learn the lessons of what we are seeing as we meet in Syria, and where we may well be on the precipice in South Sudan.

In a word, the international community cannot afford to stand idly by when confronted with ethnic cleansing, war crimes, crimes against humanity, mass atrocity, and the crime whose name we should always shudder to mention; namely, genocide.

What makes the Rwandan genocide, whose 20th anniversary we are also now observing, so unspeakable is not only the horror of the genocide, of the mass atrocities in Rwanda, where 10,000 were slaughtered each day, but that this genocide was preventable.

No one can say that we did not know. We knew, but we did not act, just as we know what is occurring in South Sudan today and we are failing to act.

• (2125)

Out of the ashes of the Holocaust came the Genocide Convention, the so-called “never again” convention which, tragically, has been violated again and again. In the shadow of Rwanda, however, 192 states unanimously adopted the responsibility to protect doctrine otherwise known as R2P.

In 2003, in the preface to his book *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, Canadian Senator Roméo Dallaire wrote as follows:

Almost fifty years to the day that my father and father-in-law helped to liberate Europe—when the extermination camps were uncovered and when, in one voice, humanity said, “Never again”—we once again sat back and permitted this unspeakable horror to occur.

Added Dallaire in words that were eerily prescient, his book was published in 2003, but written before what was occurring in Darfur was even known to any but the very few. He went on to say, “The genocide in Rwanda was a failure of humanity that could easily happen again”.

Yet we are beholding a failure of all R2P, or I would put it another way, a failure to implement R2P rather than a failure of the doctrine itself in South Sudan, and I would say elsewhere as in Syria.

Simply put, we do not even see the invocation of the doctrine itself by the government. Indeed the Government of Canada has been reticent to even use the term R2P, even though it is one of the most important normative, if not juridical doctrines certainly of the 21st century and going back even to the latter part of the 20th century. It has been reticent to even use the term, let alone give expression to the compelling principles of civilian protection, that whole range of protective options that underlie it. But, if one is going

to implement R2P, one has to at least begin to acknowledge it, to affirm it, and then move on to implement it.

We must ask ourselves now in relation to what is happening in South Sudan and in reference to R2P, what is it that we have learned, or more important, what must we do and where is R2P in all of this?

In my brief remaining time I propose to summarize some of the foundational lessons of the Rwandan genocide, again not because South Sudan is the same, the contexts are clearly quite different and the factual dimensions, while bearing some resemblance, are also different, but rather because it may shed some light on what we mean by R2P, how we can pour content into it and how we can ensure that the responsibility to protect like never again does not become an idle slogan or cliché, but can rather serve as the basis for preventive and protective action for the benefit of the people of South Sudan.

The first lesson is the danger of forgetting and the importance and responsibility of remembrance itself, le devoir de mémoire, of bearing witness to unspeakable horrors and learning from the collective failure to act which made them possible. Remembrance is an abiding moral imperative that must underpin R2P itself, that we are each, wherever we are, the guarantors of each other's destiny and we must act accordingly.

The second lesson, which emerges both from the Rwandan genocide and not unlike the Holocaust, is the danger of state-sanctioned cultures of hate and the corresponding responsibility to prevent. Simply put, the Rwandan genocide occurred not only because of the machinery of death, but because of state-sanctioned incitement to hate. Indeed, as the Supreme Court recognized and as echoed by the International Criminal Tribunals for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the Holocaust did not begin in the gas chambers. It began with words. In particular, the jurisprudence of the Rwandan tribunals demonstrates that these acts of genocide were preceded by, and anchored in, the state-orchestrated demonization and dehumanization of the minority Tutsi population.

I mention this because as we meet there have been troubling news stories reported to UN sources with respect to the use of radio broadcasts in South Sudan encouraging the rape of women from certain ethnic groups, horrific and hateful incitement eerily similar to that which precipitated those kinds of criminality in Rwanda itself.

• (2130)

Simply put, the international community must bear in mind, as the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed in the Mugasera case, that incitement to hate and genocide is a crime in and of itself. Taking action to prevent it, as the genocide convention compels us, is not a policy option; it is an international legal obligation of the highest order, so the responsibility to prevent here is yet another compelling component of R2P. In this regard, we must ensure that hate and inciting speech is prosecuted where appropriate, and that those guilty of such incitement are brought to justice, as occurred with respect to Rwanda.

*Government Orders*

The third lesson is the danger of indifference and the consequences of inaction and the corresponding responsibility to act. Simply put, while the UN Security Council and the international community dithered and delayed, Rwandans were dying. One only has to read the witness testimony on Rwanda in Philip Gourevitch's book entitled *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families*, or Gerry Caplan's searing indictment of indifference in his book on *The Preventable Genocide* or the testimony of Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* to understand not only the horror of this Rwandan genocide, but the ultimate horror that this genocide was preventable, that it was the indifference, the silence, the acquiescence, indeed the complicity of the international community that made this genocide possible.

In that regard, let there be no mistake about it. We know what is occurring in South Sudan. There is no mystery. What is necessary at this point is action in our regard.

The fourth lesson is that of a danger of a culture of impunity, and the importance therefore of bringing to justice those who are responsible for some of the horrific acts in the 20th century.

**The Chair:** The hon. member has run over on his time by at least 30% right now. Perhaps we will go to questions and comments and he can pick up on those final points.

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

• (2135)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, my colleague has said it succinctly. We know what is happening in South Sudan. We all know the horrors and we know the violence is escalating.

I have one question for my hon. colleague. What would he like to see Canada do immediately?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Chair, let me just be very specific in terms of what I think we need to do.

One, we need to appropriate and deploy the necessary forces to protect the civilians. The present configuration, UN and otherwise, is not sufficient.

Two, we need intensify international efforts to support a peace process beginning with the negotiation of an enforceable ceasefire.

In each of these things I am referring to the leadership that Canada can take in helping to bring these things about.

Three, we need a major international diplomatic effort to negotiate a cross-line humanitarian assistance approach.

Four, Canada as a lead donor, and I respect what the government has told us this evening about Canadian contributions in so many ways. That should assist us to help coordinate a \$232-million relief effort for the eight operations that will be needed with respect to the next three months alone.

Five, we need a coordinated effective strategy involving a coalition of states to sanction human rights violations, as I mentioned earlier.

Six, we must protect civilian communities and engage in a coordinated effort to deliver food, seeds, shelter, water, sanitation, all those things that have been mentioned in this debate and in this regard.

We must also bear in mind what has been said this evening about the danger of starvation and the related danger, a famine in the coming months. This could be a horrific catastrophe when joined together with the conflict itself.

These are some of the initiatives that we can take in this regard.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. H  l  ne Laverdi  re (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech; it was very informative, as all his speeches are.

This is what I took from his words:

[*English*]

We cannot afford to stand by.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member from Mount Royal is well aware that I share his views on the responsibility to protect, and that I fully agree that we have to show leadership in our support for peace negotiations.

In terms of those peace negotiations, does the hon. member consider it important, as we do, to make sure that members of civil society, specifically women, are included in any peace process?

In addition, does my hon. colleague believe that Canada should sign the arms trade treaty, which is a global initiative to prevent this kind of conflict?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Chair, if Canada wants to be a leader in this process, the government needs to work with civil society, particularly with women. I am aware of the role of women and what they can endure when there is no protection in the form of peace and security. There must be a collaboration between government and civil society now.

I agree with ratifying the treaty.

• (2140)

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I have listened carefully to the hon. member's speech, as I always do. Heaven alone knows how much experience he has in these matters. I sense his empathy for justice and the protection of vulnerable people.

Does the hon. member agree with UNICEF that children should be the focus of the international community's response in South Sudan and that more resources should be devoted to them?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Chair, I quite agree. I have sometimes quoted in this House the most important lesson my daughter taught me when she was 15. She is 33 now. This is what she told me.

*Government Orders*

[English]

She told me, “Daddy, if you want to know how to protect human rights in this world, at any time, in any situation, in any part of the world, in any place where there is conflict, ask yourself the question: Is it good for children? What is it that we can do that will be good for children? That is the real test of human rights, Daddy”.

[Translation]

Indeed, for me, the issue of the children is at the heart of this conflict.

[English]

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I rise to express Canada's deep concern about the serious humanitarian crisis in South Sudan and to discuss how our development and international humanitarian assistance efforts are responding to and adapting to the crisis.

For anyone who has been following the situation in South Sudan, it is heartrending. While the media have predominantly portrayed the crisis as the outbreak of tensions between President Salva Kiir and his former vice-president, Riek Machar, it is also fueled by ethnic tensions and driven by broader political motivations. The resulting conflict has left between 10,000 and 40,000 people dead and has displaced more than one million. Almost a quarter of these people have taken refuge in neighbouring countries, straining their resources and threatening to destabilize the region. Apart from the gravity and tragedy of the situation, South Sudan is a case in point about how daunting a task it is to build a new nation left fragile from decades of civil war and, therefore, how much care we need to take to continue to support South Sudan's journey to peace, stability, and prosperity.

South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011 after decades of civil war. The war left terrible scars. An estimated 90% of South Sudan's people live below the poverty line, and up to 40% of the population is considered food insecure. The child mortality rate is high, and the maternal mortality rate is the highest in the world. With the war over, a government in place ready to work with donor countries, and a resource-rich country with vast potential, South Sudan had every possibility of a bright future ahead of it. However, the country is still undeniably fragile. The war left many issues with Sudan unresolved, while South Sudan remained highly militarized and prone to intertribal conflict. Youth are vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups, while women remain subject to gender-based violence. In a society that already ceded them little control over their resources and few opportunities for advancement, they cannot realize their full potential and contribute to the stability of their families and communities.

The governance of the nation also remains weak. Apart from the current political divisions, the nascent government of South Sudan lacks capacity to promote economic growth, develop infrastructure, provide security, and deliver services such as health and education. Likewise, mechanisms to support good governance that we take for granted here in Canada are weak in South Sudan. Some 975 civil society organizations operate in South Sudan, and their capacity is limited, as is that of the private sector, which is held back by a lack

of foreign investment and infrastructure, limited access to financing, and the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in the population.

While I say that the situation is dire, it is not without hope, and that is why Canada remains a player in South Sudan. Canada has remained committed to South Sudan's development as a new country. In the face of the considerable challenge of the current situation in that country, Canada's fundamental position has not changed, as South Sudan still represents tremendous potential for growth and stability, and its people are still just as deserving of safety, security, prosperity, and the ability to contribute to their communities.

Canada is following the current crisis closely and is determining how best to deliver our international development assistance in response to the evolving situation. For the present, it is true that conflict has interrupted some bilateral projects unavoidably, but many Canadian initiatives continue to operate. We also continue to work toward helping the people of South Sudan, both to meet the current crisis and to promote long-term development through partner organizations active in the field.

To address immediate humanitarian needs, Canada has provided nearly \$25 million in response to appeals this year from the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and Canadian non-governmental organizations. These organizations were present in South Sudan before the current conflict and, as they have considerable reach throughout the country, it makes sense to focus our humanitarian assistance funding through them.

• (2145)

Together, these organizations are providing emergency food assistance, water, sanitation and hygiene, emergency medical care, emergency nutritional support, protection services, and shelter to vulnerable populations.

Canada will continue to closely monitor the situation and assess how best to support the evolving situation. Of particular concern are the more than one million people displaced by conflict both within South Sudan and as refugees in neighbouring countries. The upcoming rainy season will make the current humanitarian situation even worse, as roads become impassable and humanitarian organizations must resort to costly air drops of food to reach the most vulnerable.

Food insecurity remains another principal concern of our humanitarian assistance, though this has also been a perennial challenge in the country, even before the present situation. Before the conflict, more than 1 million South Sudanese were at risk of severe food insecurity this year. As a result of the crisis, now 3.7 million are at risk.

*Government Orders*

A second area of great hardship and great opportunity is maternal, newborn, and child health. Health indicators for women and children in South Sudan are among the worst in the world. South Sudan is one of Canada's priority Muskoka initiative countries. Accordingly, Canada is and will remain one of its top donors in maternal, newborn, and child health. Canada has taken a leadership role in addressing the health challenges faced by women, newborns, and children in the world's poorest countries, including South Sudan. Our G8 Muskoka initiative on maternal, newborn, and child health will save the lives of 1.3 million children and newborns, as well as more than 60,000 young mothers.

Canada will hold a summit that will provide civil society and the private sector, along with global and Canadian leaders in health, the opportunity to come together and build a consensus on where to focus efforts to maximize results for those in need. Canada has been given high praise for its leadership in this important area. All Canadians can be proud of our government's record in this important area.

Rosemary McCarney, coordinator for the Canadian Network for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, said:

Canada came out of the gate when MDG 4 and 5 were the worst performing MDGs and Canada said we're going to do something about that, and get our G8 partners onto it, and kept going.

David Morley of UNICEF Canada recently praised our efforts. He said that "the Government of Canada [is] a global leader in maternal, newborn and child health".

Even the *Toronto Star* gave the Prime Minister credit in a recent editorial, declaring:

Canada's contribution is almost twice what we might normally have been expected to provide.

It thanked our government for our ambitious leadership.

The third thrust of Canada's development program in South Sudan is governance. While the Government of South Sudan has made progress in recent years, for example, by holding a national constitutional review and passing key legislation to govern areas such as elections and financial accountability, many public institutions lack the systems and skills needed to carry out their core functions, deliver basic services, and fight corruption.

The current crisis has made it especially clear that broad participation of all South Sudanese in the country's future, one that encompasses an inclusive peace agreement and a comprehensive reconciliation process addressing the grievances that drive conflict, is necessary for long-term stability.

Of course, even if the current conflict were resolved in the near future, much more work would remain to be done. Canada recognizes the inherent risks and is working with our partners conscientiously and methodically to minimize them, work around them, and continually reassess them.

The South Sudan situation is dynamic, and our response must be correspondingly flexible, adapting the modalities and partners we work through to remain realistic in our expectations of future progress.

Above all, we must stay engaged to ensure that development gains are not lost. What will not change, however, is Canada's recognition of South Sudan as a viable development partner whose people deserve and have a friend in Canada.

• (2150)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for her very informative speech.

In 2011, Canada took a strong stand on protecting women and girls from sexual violence in Libya.

Does my colleague know whether any of the programs supported by the Canadian government have a specific mandate to protect women and girls from sexual violence?

[*English*]

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Mr. Chair, our record as a government on this issue is not in question. We have condemned gender-based violence anywhere we have seen it taking place. We put forward money in Congo to ensure that women who had faced gender-based violence were given the services they needed to assist them to recover. We put forward money for therapy and counselling to make sure that no woman was left behind.

We are working with our partners in South Sudan. We have contributed money to our partners that we trust. Médecins Sans Frontières Canada has received \$1 million. The International Committee of the Red Cross has received \$2.5 million. There is the International Organization for Migration and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. All of these organizations are concerned about women and girls. We know that working through them we are going to get those kinds of programs to the most vulnerable.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for her speech and for co-hosting a briefing we did on South Sudan.

I would also like to thank her for saying that Canada must stay engaged and that we must be flexible and adaptable. It has been said over and over again tonight that we are all very concerned about famine.

I have two questions. How does the government envision its role in bringing parties back to the negotiating table under IGAD? How will the government respond to the influx of refugees from neighbouring countries?

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Mr. Chair, as I said in my remarks, we are going to remain flexible, and we are going to continue to assess the situation.

*Government Orders*

As I said in my remarks, we recognize the great potential South Sudan has. We would like to see that country, as nascent as it is, have the opportunity to move forward to develop its resources and to become a contributing member within the African continent. We are going to continue to assess that situation on an ongoing basis.

I would like to read a quote into the record, a quote I keep on my BlackBerry, because it reminds me continually of the attitude this government has taken whenever it is assessing:

...when the need is great and the cause is just, Canadians are always there. And we always will be. Because that is what Canadians do.

That was said by our Prime Minister two years ago. I believe that it is the attitude of this government. We will continue to assess. We will continue to be flexible. We will continue to help.

• (2155)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for her informative speech.

Early in April, the government announced that it was going to send \$24.85 million in humanitarian aid to South Sudan. Can my colleague tell us whether all of that money has been transferred to partners, including UNICEF, Doctors Without Borders and World Vision, that have extensive on-the-ground expertise in dealing with crises like the one in South Sudan?

[*English*]

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for that question, because it once again gives me the opportunity to affirm that when this government makes a pledge, we pay what we pledge. We call on other donors to do the same. When they make a pledge, it needs to come forward. That is our record, and we have been thanked by multiple organizations around the world. The Global Fund and GAVI Alliance have all commended our government for being upfront with the money that we have pledged and ensuring that it was received.

I again want to reaffirm the amounts to my colleague. There was \$1 million to the United Nations World Food Programme, \$3 million to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, \$2.5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross, \$2 million to the International Organization for Migration, \$500,000 to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, \$2 million to the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service, \$1.5 million to World Relief Canada, \$1 million to Médecins sans frontières Canada, and \$1.35 million to World Vision Canada.

I have spoken to many of these organizations. They are very grateful for Canada's intervention.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Chair, I just want to raise one last time the issue of children in South Sudan. There have been more grave child rights violations between December 2013 and now than there were in all of 2013. Twenty-two thousand boys and girls have been impacted. There were grave violations against children, including maiming and killing, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the recruitment of child soldiers. These are crimes under international law, and the perpetrators must be held accountable.

I am wondering what the government envisions doing to protect children using its voice in the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict. What does the government plan to do to raise the voice and bring political pressure to protect the children of South Sudan?

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Mr. Chair, obviously all of us are concerned about the plight of the children. No one with a heart cannot help but feel the plight of these young ones. The population of South Sudan in total is a very young population, and many of these young people have never known anything but conflict in their lives, which is making the situation even more difficult.

As a government we have in the past invested in the governance capacity growth of South Sudan and we will continue to do so. There are long-term issues that have to be resolved there. The country needs to develop its government and judicial systems so that people who have perpetrated crimes are brought to justice, and that justice system needs to be established. It is a long-term project, but we will continue to condemn acts of violence, particularly against children.

If I could be so bold, I do not know of anybody in the House who could be as concerned as I am about the health of all of Africa. I have an African son-in-law. My daughter and my son-in-law are currently living in Africa and my daughter is teaching in Africa, so it is compelling to me and to my family to know that Africa is a healthy continent.

It means every country has to be healthy. It means that every child has to have opportunity and a future, and we are going to continue to work to make sure that happens.

• (2200)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I rise here this evening because South Sudan is facing a very serious humanitarian crisis.

Since December, political differences among the leaders of South Sudan have resulted in violence. Thousands of people have been killed and hundreds of thousands have been displaced.

Fleeing the violence, these refugees find themselves in overcrowded camps spread across the country or in neighbouring countries. They live in appalling conditions. The secretary general of the Ethiopian Red Cross has reported that living conditions in the camps have deteriorated, since water and shelter are becoming scarce.

People are living outdoors in temperatures of up to 45°C, often without latrines and with very little drinking water. Poor hygiene and sanitation conditions clear the way for the spread of diseases that could become epidemics.

As we know, the rainy season is about to unleash its fury in that region, which is why urgent action is needed. The rainy season could promote the spread of water-borne diseases such as cholera, diarrhea and malaria. Furthermore, the resulting floods will make the roads impassable and prevent NGOs from getting humanitarian supplies to their destination.

*Government Orders*

As a volunteer physician during the Gulf War, I know that there is a real potential for epidemics to develop and that treatment will only become more and more difficult.

The medical situation in South Sudan before the conflict was very rudimentary and did not really adequately meet the people's needs.

The violence only made the situation worse, either because the medical infrastructure was destroyed, or because the medical staff became refugees or because people were afraid to face the violence to go to the hospitals.

The situation is quite alarming. The university hospital of Malakal is attacked daily by armed men who pillage and ruthlessly kill the patients. Such abuses speak to the importance, in such a conflict, of protecting and respecting civilians and the infrastructure and medical staff in place to help the public.

The underlying principle of Canada's international policy is that a just and lasting peace is key for resolving the humanitarian political crises and human rights crises in South Sudan. Putting into practice this principle set out by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development requires not just financial aid, but also humanitarian aid.

That is why the government needs to send additional emergency humanitarian assistance and co-ordinate with the most effective and experienced humanitarian organizations working on the ground.

The Canadian government can provide humanitarian assistance through established partners that have been working with NGOs in South Sudan for decades and that have close ties to the communities. They are best able and best equipped to meet the needs of those most seriously affected.

South Sudan is facing a humanitarian crisis, and the existing medical services will not be able to keep up without help.

● (2205)

Canada has a special role to play in South Sudan. We strongly supported the peace process that led to the 2011 referendum and the independence of South Sudan. The Government of Canada formed a task force on Sudan; it was made up of a dozen people in the Department of Foreign Affairs. That group coordinated Canada's approach to South Sudan in diplomatic, military and developmental matters. However, the Conservative government dissolved it in the fall of 2013, although the group was needed more than ever.

We in the NDP are asking the Conservatives to work with the international community to restore stability and support efforts to achieve a peaceful reconciliation in South Sudan. To do that, we

must support and promote the United Nations Security Council resolution that provides stronger investigative tools for the United Nations mission in South Sudan and supports its initiatives to provide assistance and shelter for civilians caught up in the conflict.

However, we must not stop there. Canada must use its diplomatic influence to make sure that women and members of civil society have a place at the negotiating table. We do not want to get involved with local politics. We do want to support the people by protecting international humanitarian law so that they can play their part in resolving the conflict.

I will finish my speech with the reminder that Canada has a place among the key players and that we must use that place to help restore peace.

**Ms. H  l  ne Laverdi  re (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for her touching speech. I know that this is a very sensitive issue for her because she worked as a volunteer doctor in crisis situations. We see that people with first-hand experience understand all too well the urgency of the situation. The reality is that these are real human beings who are dying or who have nothing.

Does she believe that Canada should also work with its partners to ensure the best access possible to aid workers on the ground?

● (2210)

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for her question. She was right in noticing that this is a sensitive issue for me.

Indeed, memories are coming back to me. I have seen with my own eyes children who were burned and severed corpses. I do not think anyone on this earth would want to see headless corpses and burned children.

Recently, I learned that the rebels were taking residents and separating them by ethnicity. The violence has reached such a level that we will soon be talking about genocide. Canada must use its leadership on the international stage to stop this massacre and prevent a tragedy like the one that occurred in Rwanda.

[English]

**The Chair:** It being 10:10 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 53(1), the committee will rise and I will leave the Chair.

(Government Business No. 9 reported)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:11 p.m.)







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