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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 15, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 15, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)
[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32, I have the honour to table in the House, in both official languages, a document entitled “Proposals to correct certain anomalies, inconsistencies and errors and to deal with other matters of a non-controversial and uncomplicated nature in the Statutes of Canada and to repeal certain provisions that have expired, lapsed or otherwise ceased to have effect”.

I understand that this document is deemed to be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for study.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 14 petitions.

* * *

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-598, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (notification of victims).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this bill for consideration. It will protect victims whose perpetrators of crime now find themselves in the immigration and refugee system versus the criminal system.

If we deport people who then come back into this country and we detain them under an immigration warrant, the victims are not notified that the perpetrators are back in the country. If the perpetrators of crimes are Canadian citizens the victims would be

notified as to where they are. However, if they happen to be foreign nationals who were deported and have entered the country illegally, the system does not afford the victims the right to know that their perpetrators are back in the country. This bill would correct that injustice so that regardless of where the perpetrators are, whether they are foreign nationals or nationals, whether they are in this country illegally or legally, whether they are detained in either system, the victims have the absolute right to know.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

CADETS

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of a number of residents of Ontario, mostly in the town of Aurora, regarding a group of Valcartier cadets who in 1974 were part of a cadet camp in Valcartier where there was an explosion killing six cadets, wounding some 60 others, and a number of survivors who are concerned they have needs that are not being met.

The ombudsman has determined that it is in the national and public interest to have a full investigation and make recommendations to the government to help these former cadets and that it requires the consent of the Minister of National Defence. Therefore, this is a petition to the Minister of National Defence, calling upon the minister to grant the Canadian Forces' ombudsman the authority to investigate this case and make recommendations to the government to help these former cadets.

This is an important and serious matter. I hope we will get a positive answer on this question soon. These cadets have been waiting eight months for an answer.

BORDER CROSSING

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting 32 petitions today on behalf of the citizens of Medicine Hat, with hundreds of signatures, to make the Wild Horse border crossing to the United States a 24-hour port of entry for commercial business. The petitioners are asking Parliament to legislate the opening of this port to the United States so that Alberta, which has huge commercial value trade north to south, will then have two 24-hour ports of entry.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

LABOUR-SPONSORED FUNDS

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition signed by thousands of Quebecers. This is not the first time I have presented this kind of petition.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to reverse its 2013 decision to abolish the 15% tax credit for savings invested in labour-sponsored funds. They are saying that the middle class often uses these funds as a primary tool for saving for retirement. The funds create jobs and spur economic development. The petitioners are saying that this decision is jeopardizing the savings of thousands of Canadian workers.

[English]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting three separate petitions today.

The first is to create an extractive sector ombudsman mechanism in Canada.

●(1010)

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition refers to the use of cluster munitions. A number of my constituents are concerned about that practice.

SEX SELECTION

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, finally, I have a number of signatures from my constituents, who would like the House to condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

CANADA POST

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by many residents of Cape Breton, calling upon the government to reverse the recent cuts to Canada Post services and instead explore other options for modernizing Canada Post's business.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

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

The first is from residents from Saanich—Gulf Islands, Victoria, Sydney, and Pender Island, calling on the government to refuse to ratify the Canada-China investment treaty. It is a significant threat to Canadian sovereignty and should be rejected.

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is calling on the government to open an investigation into the 2011 efforts in election fraud and the so-called robocall scandal. Despite a decision made recently by the commissioner of elections to close the books on this, many significant questions remain, such as those identified by Mr. Justice Mosley of the Federal Court when he looked into the matter.

The call for an inquiry remains.

CANADA POST

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to table yet another petition regarding Canada Post. In fact, yesterday, we had hundreds of people show up in The Maples, looking for petitions to sign. Today, I table one, asking the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada to reverse the decision that has been made by Canada Post that will limit door-to-door delivery and bring drastic increases to our postage stamp costs.

The petitioners are looking to the government and calling upon it to reverse these decisions.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 444, 459, and 460.

[Text]

Question No. 444—**Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to Finance Canada: during the period from fiscal year 2005-2006 to fiscal year 2012-2013 inclusively, what was the average interest rate paid each year on total government borrowing, including but not limited to the issuance of bonds and treasury bills, and any borrowing from financial institutions?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, The government publishes annually, in the Public Accounts of Canada, the average interest rate for each major category of outstanding market debt, including marketable bonds, treasury bills, retail debt, Canada bills, and foreign currency notes, along with the average rate on total market debt.

This information is available in PDF format from Library and Archives Canada through the following links:

For 2005-06, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2006/v1pa06-e.pdf, table 6.10, page 6.10.

For 2006-07, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2007/P51-1-2007-1E.pdf, table 6.10, page 6.10.

For 2007-08, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2008/49-eng.pdf, table 6.10, page 6.9.

For 2008-09, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2009/49-eng.pdf, table 6.10, page 6.9.

For 2009-10, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2010/v1pa2010e_revised.pdf, table 6.9, page 6.9.

For 2010-11, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2011/Vol1pa2011e_revised.pdf, table 6.8, page 6.9.

For 2011-12, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2012/49-eng.pdf, table 6.8, page 6.9.

Routine Proceedings

And for 2012-13, http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2013/2013-voll-eng.pdf, table 6.8, page 6.9.

Question No. 459—**Mr. Ryan Cleary:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard: (a) how many foreign and domestic fishing trawlers were boarded outside the 200-mile limit on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, as well as the Flemish Cap, in 2013; (b) how many warnings, if any, were issued to the fishing vessels; and (c) how many official citations, if any, were issued to the fishing vessels?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, in 2013 Canadian fishery officers, acting in their capacity as Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, NAFO, inspectors, conducted a total of 145 at-sea inspections, three domestic and 142 foreign, outside the 200-mile limit on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks as well as the Flemish Cap NAFO regulatory area. During this time period there were 13 citations issued and no warnings.

Question No. 460—**Mr. Ryan Cleary:**

With regard to the Department of National Defence: (a) how many foreign and domestic fishing trawlers were boarded outside the 200-mile limit on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, as well as the Flemish Cap, in 2013; (b) how many warnings, if any, were issued to the fishing vessels; and (c) how many official citations, if any, were issued to the fishing vessels?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, in 2013 the Department of National Defence did not board any foreign or domestic fishing trawlers outside the 200-mile limit on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks or the Flemish Cap, did not issue any warnings, and did not issue any citations to fishing vessels.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 433, 434, 441, 447, 452, and 458 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 433—**Hon. Ralph Goodale:**

With regard to contracts under \$10,000 granted by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada since January 1, 2013: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 434—**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:**

With regard to contracts under \$10,000 granted by Shared Services Canada since January 1, 2013: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 441—**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:**

With regard to contracts under \$10,000 granted by Environment Canada since January 1, 2013: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 447—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

— With regard to diagnosis, treatment, awareness and prevention, and research of eating disorders: (a) do the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and Health Canada (HC) have any statistics about how many Canadians suffer from each of the following conditions, (i) anorexia nervosa, (ii) bulimia nervosa, (iii) binge eating disorder; (b) do the CIHR and HC have any statistics about the average costs of each of (i) anorexia nervosa, (ii) bulimia nervosa, (iii) binge eating disorder to the health system; (c) do the CIHR and HC have any statistics about how many Canadians (i) recover, (ii) relapse, (iii) die each year as a result of eating disorders; (d) do the CIHR and HC have any statistics about what treatment is available for eating disorders, broken down by province and territory, from (i) daily care to long-term residential care, (ii) how many publicly funded beds are available; (e) do the CIHR and HC have any statistics about how many Canadian psychiatrists specialize in eating disorders, and any statistics or information about what succession planning is in place to replace those who specialize in these disorders, broken down by province and territory; (f) do the CIHR and HC have any statistics about what eating disorders training programs are available for health professionals, and any statistics or information on what succession planning is in place to replace those who serve Canadians with eating disorders, broken down by province and territory; (g) do the CIHR and HC have any statistics about what long-term, publicly-funded residential care facilities are available, (i) the average wait time for treatment by such a facility, (ii) how many Canadians are forced to leave the country for treatment, (iii) the average cost to the family for out-of-country treatment, (iv) the cost to the health care system if the province or territory reimburses families for out-of-country treatment; (h) do the CIHR and HC have any statistics about Canadians who are forced to go abroad for private treatment, and any statistics or information on what follow-up care, is available, if any, broken down by province and territory; (i) do the CIHR and HC have any statistics about the average economic costs for eating disorders to families including, but not limited to, (i) weekly uninsured costs of appointments to psychologists, (ii) nutritionists, (iii) being unable to work or house oneself; (j) do the CIHR and HC have any statistics about what specific eating disorder diagnostic data the Hospital Mental Health Database captures, as well as information about this data; (k) do the CIHR and HC have any statistics about what percentage of deaths related to eating disorders are not being captured by the Hospital Morbidity Database (HMD); (l) what discussion, if any, has the government had with its provincial and territorial counterparts about coding eating disorders in hospitalization records; (m) what discussion, if any, has the government had with its provincial and territorial counterparts about the Discharge Abstract Database covering all jurisdictions of Canada; (n) what, if any, discussion has the government had with its provincial and territorial counterparts about coding eating disorders in the National Ambulatory Care Reporting System; (o) why has HC or any other government agency not undertaken a review of funded eating disorder services in Canada; (p) what are the specific details of each of the “many initiatives” referred to in the government’s response to written question Q-225, that HC supports related to eating disorders; (q) why does the Public Health Agency of Canada not conduct surveillance activities related to eating disorders, and what government agency does conduct such surveillance activities; (r) why does HC not include low body mass index as a separate category; (s) for each of the 57 projects related to eating disorders that Canadian Institutes of Health Research CIHR funded between 2006 and 2013, (i) what are the details of the project, (ii) what is the funding, (iii) was the principal investigator a member of any of CIHR’s review committees; (t) of CIHR’s 11 peer review committees, which ones include a member who has expertise in eating disorders, and for each committee listed, identify the individual with eating disorders expertise; (u) which of CIHR’s peer review committees includes a Canadian living with an eating disorder; and (v) what consideration, if any, has been given to a (i) national eating disorders awareness and education campaign, (ii) pan-Canadian strategy to address eating disorders, including early diagnosis and access to the full range of necessary care, (iii) national registry, (iv) robust research program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 452—Mr. Matthew Kellway:

With regard to suppliers of garments and textiles that are manufactured outside Canada, in whole or in part, and which have been contracted by any agency or department of the government: (a) what is the process by which Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) may ask suppliers for evidence of compliance with local labour laws; (b) on how many occasions has PWGSC asked suppliers for evidence of compliance with local labour laws; (c) if PWGSC has ever requested evidence of supplier compliance with local labour laws, (i) which office within PWGSC initiated these requests and under whose authority, (ii) why were these requests initiated, (iii) when were these requests initiated, (iv) were these requests for evidence limited in scope to the production process under the direct

purview of the supplier, or did they extend to all inputs in the production process even if these inputs were contracted out or otherwise not directly manufactured by the supplier, (v) what type of evidence did PWGSC ask suppliers to provide, (vi) did PWGSC request that suppliers provide evidence verified by independent auditors or inspectors, (vii) did PWGSC ever give individuals from the public, organizations, or governments an opportunity to provide evidence about supplier compliance with local labour laws and to whom were these opportunities extended; (d) if suppliers have ever responded to requests made by the PWGSC for evidence of compliance with local labour laws, (i) how did suppliers respond to these requests, (ii) what information did suppliers provide as evidence, (iii) where and at which office are records of these responses kept, (iv) what method was used by PWGSC to ensure that evidence provided by these suppliers was accurate, (v) did PWGSC ever rely on the services of independent auditors or inspectors to verify the evidence provided by suppliers; (e) what is PWGSC’s policy toward suppliers that are not operating in compliance with local labour laws; (f) has PWGSC ever determined that suppliers were not operating in compliance with local labour laws; (g) if PWGSC has ever determined that suppliers were not operating in compliance with local labour laws, what actions did it take; (h) has PWGSC ever rejected a bid from a potential supplier on the basis that this supplier was not likely to comply, or did not have a record of complying, with local labour laws; (i) has PWGSC ever withdrawn from a contract with a supplier, attempted to withdraw from a contract with a supplier, or threatened to withdraw from a contract with a supplier on the basis that this supplier was not operating in compliance with local labour laws; (j) has PWGSC ever made the prospect of future contracts with a supplier dependent on that supplier demonstrating progress or improvement with respect to their compliance with local labour laws; (k) has PWGSC ever made the fulfilment of its contract with a supplier dependent on that supplier demonstrating progress or improvement with respect to their compliance with local labour laws; (l) has PWGSC ever determined that, if there are any countries or geographical areas in which labour standards are so unacceptable, it will not accept bids from local suppliers and, if so, (i) what were these countries or geographical areas, (ii) when were each of these countries or geographical areas deemed unacceptable, (iii) did PWGSC clearly communicate with suppliers in that country or geographical area about the conditions that would have to be met for PWGSC to resume its willingness to contract with local suppliers; and (m) is the PWGSC provision that requires supplier compliance with local laws limited in scope to the production process under the direct purview of contracted suppliers, or does the requirement apply also to any firms sub-contracted by suppliers to provide either inputs or labour and, if it does not apply to any firms sub-contracted by suppliers, (i) what is PWGSC’s rationale for limiting the requirement in such a way, (ii) is PWGSC concerned that suppliers may avoid having to meet the requirement by simply subcontracting their work, and why or why not?

(Return tabled)

*Business of Supply***Question No. 458—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With regard to details provided in the government's response to written question Q-64: (a) what effort has the government made to reach out to Positive Change, an organization which represents mothers who have lost their sons to violence; (b) on what dates have officials from Public Safety Canada (PSC) met with mothers who have lost a son to violence, and with how many such mothers have PSC officials met; (c) why did the government not proactively reach out to the Somali-Canadian community when homicides among young Somali-Canadian men occurred in 2006; (d) what specific issues has the organization "Canadian Friends of Somalia" (CFS) raised with the government since 2009; (e) what specific support has the government provided in response to issues raised by the CFS concerning Somali youth in Canada "as they relate to radicalization to violence and terrorism, and to explore avenues of support from the federal government and law enforcement to address these issues"; (f) for each "ad hoc meeting" between PSC and CFS, (i) what is the date, (ii) how many people attended and from where, (iii) what is the purpose; (g) for each "ongoing meeting" between PSC and CFS, (i) what is the date, (ii) how many people attended and from where, (iii) what is the purpose; (h) at the initial meeting of PSC officials with CFS on July 15, 2009 in Ottawa, (i) what specific issues were discussed, (ii) in what riding, (iii) were Members of Parliament present; (i) at the October 7, 2010 videoconference between PSC officials and CFS, (i) what specific issues were discussed, (ii) who were the representatives from Ottawa, Toronto and Edmonton; (j) at the March 12, 2011 meeting, (i) which specific communities were included, (ii) in what riding were Members of Parliament present, (iii) what specific issues were discussed, (iv) why did PSC provide \$1938.12 for one participant; (k) with which specific imams and from what mosques did PSC officials meet on June 18, 2011, (i) in what specific riding, (ii) were Members of Parliament present, (iii) what was the agenda for each meeting, (iv) what criteria were used to determine which imams to meet with; (l) at the June 18, 2011, PSC outreach session in Toronto, (i) which communities were represented, (ii) how was the meeting advertised, (iii) how many people attended, (iv) what was the agenda, (v) in which riding did the meeting occur, (vi) were Members of Parliament present; (m) at the June 19, 2011, PSC meeting in Toronto, (i) which Somali-Canadian youth organizations attended, (ii) how was the meeting advertised, (iii) how many people attended, (iv) what was the agenda, (v) in which riding did the meeting occur, (vi) were Members of Parliament present; (n) at the May 29, 2012, PSC meeting in Toronto, (i) which officials met with what community representatives, (ii) how was the meeting advertised, (iii) how many people attended, (iv) what was the agenda, (v) why did PS provide \$700.05 for one participant, (vi) in which riding did the meeting occur, (vii) were Members of Parliament present; (o) at the June 8, 2012, PSC meeting in Hamilton, (i) with what community representatives did the former Minister of Public Safety meet, (ii) how was the meeting advertised, (iii) how many people attended, (iv) what was the agenda, (v) why did PS provide \$785.42 for one participant, (vi) in which riding did the meeting occur, and were Members of Parliament present; (p) at the October 3 and 4, 2012, PSC meeting in Toronto, (i) what community representatives attended, (ii) how was the workshop event on crime prevention and community safety planning advertised, (iii) how many people attended, (iv) what was the agenda, (v) why did PS provide \$8958.12 in travel expenses for participants, (vi) in which riding did the meeting occur, (vii) were Members of Parliament present; (q) at the February 20, 2013, PSC employment information event with law enforcement agencies for Somali-Canadian youth in Ottawa, (i) who attended, (ii) how was the meeting advertised, (iii) how many people attended, (iv) what was the agenda, (v) which law enforcement agencies were represented, (vi) in which riding did the meeting occur, (vii) were Members of Parliament present; (r) at the March 12, 2013, Ottawa PSC outreach session with Somali-Canadian youth, (i) who attended, (ii) how was the meeting advertised, (iii) how many people attended, (iv) what was the agenda, (v) in which riding did the meeting occur, (vi) were Members of Parliament present; (s) at the ministerial meeting in Toronto on September 20, 2013, (i) which community representatives attended, (ii) how was the meeting advertised, (iii) how many people attended, (iv) what was the agenda, (v) why did PSC provide \$1031.09 for one participant, (vi) in which riding did the meeting occur, (vii) were Members of Parliament present; (t) what action is the government considering regarding the more than fifty homicides in the Somali-Canadian community; (u) what action and investment has the government taken regarding Positive Change's requests for an investigation into homicides of Somali-Canadians, specifically through (i) the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, (ii) the development of federal-provincial job programs supporting Somali-Canadians, (iii) the development of job opportunities with the RCMP, (iv) an examination of witness protection; (v) who requested the October 17, 2011 meeting of PSC officials with mothers of victims of violence, (i) how many mothers attended, (ii) how was the meeting advertised, (iii) what was the agenda, (iv) in what riding did the meeting occur, (v) were Members of Parliament present; (w) why did PSC only follow up with mothers and fathers of the Edmonton Police Services; (x) why was the joint work plan developed in collaboration with CFS, (i) what other stakeholders had

input, (ii) what other stakeholders across the country have seen the work plan and commented on the plan; (y) what specific action is outlined in the work plan regarding addressing the 50-plus homicides in the Somali-Canadian community, and was Positive Change consulted to comment; (z) why were participants for the PSC October 2012 workshop invited by "the CFS and the network that the community has built over the years", (i) what stakeholders are part of the network, (ii) how did the government ensure that all stakeholder viewpoints were represented, (iii) were stakeholders informed prior to the event that a work plan would follow, (iv) where can members of the Somali-Canadian community view the work plan; (aa) were stakeholders informed prior to the October 2012 meeting that a "community's primary point of contact" would be chosen; and (bb) will the government answer subquestions (i), (k), (l), (m) and (o) from Q-64?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, CBC/Radio-Canada plays a key role in informing, entertaining and uniting Canadians and is today weakened because of the many rounds of cuts over the past 20 years, and calls on the government to: (a) reverse the \$45 million in cuts for 2014-2015 in Budget 2012; and (b) provide adequate, stable, multi-year funding to the public broadcaster so that it can fulfill its mandate.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons will be devoting today's debate to what is happening at CBC. It is a very serious situation.

This is more than just a simple debate. In truth, we are calling for an emergency debate today so that we can acknowledge the crisis at our public broadcaster. Never before has CBC been in such a crisis.

We decided that this debate needs to happen because the government has decided to wash its hands of the problem, even though it is responsible for this situation. This government ignored our calls for accountability. We asked for the government to be accountable for its actions and budget cuts at CBC.

I would also like to note that the minister pledged in this House to testify about the CBC situation before a committee. However, her big boss got his members on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to fix it so that she was not invited to come talk about this topic, which is an embarrassment for them.

Business of Supply

The government is also choosing to disregard the tens of thousands of Canadians who are speaking out and expressing their dismay at the situation at CBC/Radio-Canada. Every member here in the House must admit that they have constituents who are taking a stand and speaking out—

•(1015)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Chief Government Whip on a point of order.

[*English*]

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I understand that we are not to wear props when we are in the House of Commons. The current speaker and some other members of the NDP are currently wearing props sponsoring a political cause, and I would suggest it is inappropriate.

The Deputy Speaker: On the same point of order, the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of occasions in which Conservatives have worn pins to promote some particular cause. When we raised the issue, the Speaker at the time said that he felt it was in order.

I find somewhat surprising that the idea that wearing a pin that supports Canada's national broadcaster would somehow be offensive to the government. There have been MPs in this place who have worn hockey jerseys. My goodness, we are talking about supporting the national broadcaster. Certainly there have been precedents that the Speaker has passed judgment on, and there has been some leniency in this regard.

I am surprised, again, that the Conservatives have chosen this moment to suddenly raise an issue when other so-called “political paraphernalia” has been worn in a much larger size by Conservative colleagues, for which the member did not have such a problem. Suddenly, someone wears a button supporting the CBC, and the Conservatives have a problem with it. Of course, this is something that all Canadians support, and I am sure Conservatives, upon reflection, would support it too.

There is no need to raise such points and objections at a time when we are discussing the support of our national broadcaster, something Conservatives obviously do not so much believe in.

The Deputy Speaker: I think we are all aware of the general policies that we have followed in this House for a long period of time on the use of props and also of wearing pins and other paraphernalia. I will respond to the whip in particular in this regard.

The general rule, of course, is that pins and paraphernalia are not to be worn if it causes disruption to the House. I am a bit concerned about the point of order being raised now because these pins have been worn for at least a week or 10 days, as has been my observation, to this point in time. Therefore, I am having some difficulty accepting any suggestion that it is causing disruption, because if it was, points of order would obviously have been raised earlier in this process.

Again, speaking to the members who are wearing the pins, if it is going to cause a problem at some point today, we may very well reverse the position that I am now taking, which is that members can continue to wear the pins. However, if it is disruptive to the process

in the House, there will be a direction from the Chair to have the pins removed.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher.

•(1020)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, this government is also choosing to ignore the tens of thousands of people who have spoken up and expressed their dismay over the situation at CBC/Radio-Canada. None of us can deny that people in our ridings have taken a stand and spoken up in favour of the CBC. Every day, MPs receive calls and emails similar to the ones I receive. They know that over 25,000 people have gone to the trouble of signing the petition on our website because they believe that an effective public broadcaster is a vital part of a healthy media and cultural landscape, and a strong CBC is important to them.

There is no doubt that the Conservatives are wholly responsible for what is happening to the CBC. It has come to this because the Conservatives wanted it to come to this. When the Conservatives choose to attack the CBC by slashing its budget even as the corporation is coping with the toughest market conditions in its history and is already struggling, they are just showing how mean-spirited they can be.

The Conservatives did not really adopt a hands-off approach with the CBC. What they really did was make drastic cuts to the public broadcaster's budget: \$115 million over three years. That will certainly have serious consequences: years of belt-tightening, service elimination, job cuts and talent loss.

We have only just begun to see how this will affect the CBC. We have all heard about the heartfelt appeal of the corporation's leading radio and television journalists: Céline Galipeau, Patrice Roy, Alain Gravel and many others have warned that the cuts will soon have a serious impact on the work of the creative people at CBC and especially the corporation's ability to practice good journalism.

We have every reason to believe that they will gut the CBC's sports service, which so many people tune in to, and that they will not spare regional stations either. When Céline Galipeau decides to publish an open letter in the newspaper, then we should definitely be worried too.

[*English*]

The two governing parties have developed a long tradition of attacking the CBC. The Conservatives cut another \$115 million over three years starting in 2012, and \$45 million of that will be cut this year. These cuts are why the CBC is in so much trouble today.

Business of Supply

Before the Conservatives came to power, the Liberals had cut hundreds of millions of dollars to the CBC and left it more vulnerable than had any other government before it. Some of the Liberals in the House who nowadays will stand up to bravely defend the CBC were actually part of the government that cut \$414 million from our public broadcaster in the first years of being in office, after promising they would protect the CBC. After playing this trick once in 1993, they played it again in 1997. The Liberals are responsible for some of the worst cuts in the history of the CBC and caused thousands of job losses at the CBC.

I speak today from a position of credibility as a New Democrat when I say that what we need for the CBC is adequate, stable, multi-year funding to allow it to live up to its mandate. This needs to be done if we want a strong, independent public broadcaster. Canadians know that we are the only party that can make this happen.

There are very serious consequences to cutting back the CBC's funding over so many years the way both the Liberals and the Conservatives have done. We are starting to notice the effects of this new series of cuts when we hear about some of the CBC's best journalists leaving so that a younger colleague's job will be spared. We are told that the host of the show *the fifth estate* is leaving so it can keep on working with all its producers. We know that a lot of the effect of these cuts is still to come.

[*Translation*]

The news programs on the French network and on the English network are the victims of the latest cuts, which are jeopardizing the role that CBC plays in our democracy.

The show *Enquête* with Alain Gravel on Radio-Canada television is losing journalists and people who work behind the camera. Those same journalists, researchers, technicians and producers are the ones who invest time and resources into stories that other media outlets do not always pick up. It is thanks to those journalistic efforts that the public found out about the many instances of fraud and breach of trust we have seen in recent years.

Imagine for a moment that the Charbonneau commission never existed and that the sordid affairs that we are just starting to hear about were still the norm. Investing in a show like *Enquête* is very good for our society.

Since I am running out of time, I will skip ahead in my speech.

When it comes to the cuts to CBC, the other thing some people keep telling us and those concerned about the near future of the corporation is that if CBC needs adequate funding then it should come up with interesting programming. A member of the House said that. Is that not pathetic?

That is also what the minister keeps saying when we ask her the question. She says that CBC has to offer programming that appeals to Canadians. That type of answer illustrates just how far out of touch the Conservatives are with the reality of Quebec and the francophone community. I am sure that it is easy for them to forget, but Quebecers watch shows from here and like the content produced here. The same goes for the large francophone community outside Quebec.

My office is in the Vieux-Longueuil neighbourhood, which is often the backdrop for television productions because the production companies are interested in their community. Providing us with a reflection of our society is precisely the invaluable role that CBC plays.

The public broadcaster is important to people across the country who are hoping to have an independent broadcaster that is provided with adequate, stable, multi-year funding so that it can fulfill its mandate while being sheltered from the uncertainties of the advertising market.

Despite the current shortcomings, we want to keep CBC even more than ever. When we think of the cuts in the media, especially when it comes to covering international news, when we think of this culture of scrutiny that could be lost because of a government that would do well to adopt that culture, we realize how important CBC is to us.

We care about CBC. Just think of its excellent, award-winning sports coverage, which is greatly appreciated. I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to mention the high-quality coverage Radio-Canada provided of the Olympics in excellent French.

We care about CBC. Just think about its educational role, which involves not only entertaining Canadians but also keeping them informed and making them better citizens who are more thoughtful and sometimes even more cultured. It is an unique mandate and no other broadcaster bears such a responsibility.

We care about CBC. Just think about the irreplaceable democratic role it plays in keeping an eye on our society, pointing out its overlooked realities and speaking on behalf of the voices that would otherwise not be heard. Unlike government broadcasters in other parts of the world, the role of our public broadcaster is not to be a spokesperson for those in power. On the contrary, its role is to keep an eye on the successive governments and the world of politics. We could use more of that, not less.

Over the past few weeks, 25,000 Canadians have joined the NDP in saying that they care about CBC. I urge another 25,000 to join us.

Mr. Speaker, I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

• (1025)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some of the comments are interesting. We have been consistently very supportive of CBC within the Liberal Party. In fact, it was the Liberal Party that was in power when CBC first came into being, and the Liberal Party has consistently supported it through its conception.

I am very familiar with NDP behaviour on crown corporations. For example, when the Manitoba Telephone System was privatized in the province of Manitoba, the New Democrats swore they would bring it back and nationalize it. True to form, they broke that promise the moment they took office and did not do it. The NDP, in opposition, proclaims a great deal of love for a lot of things but that never materializes when it is in power, at least that has been the experience in Manitoba.

Business of Supply

It is important that we recognize everything CBC has done over the years for our country and be focused on what is happening today. What is happening today is going to have a profound and negative impact on Canada. The CBC is a vital part of promoting Canada's culture and heritage, and ensuring its longevity is of critical importance.

My question for the member is this. Is he not prepared to indicate that we need to focus our attention on the budget that CBC has today and ask the government to reinstate that money as quickly as possible?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question. I particularly appreciate the fact that he said that we should forget about what happened in other provinces, because his former government's track record here in Ottawa is much more embarrassing.

I agree with him about the cuts. We are calling on the government to reverse the \$45 million in cuts to CBC. Clearly, this is an emergency measure that, at the very least, will help the crown corporation get its head above water.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind hon. members that, of the 18 countries that have a public broadcaster, Canada ranks 15th when it comes to funding.

Norway, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, the United Kingdom, Austria, France, Belgium, Spain, Japan, Australia, Ireland and Italy all rank above us. Then comes Canada with a measly \$29 per citizen. The countries higher on the list have funding of \$180 or \$164 per citizen, and the average is between \$70 and \$100. Who is below us? The United States.

• (1030)

[*English*]

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way is right. It was the Liberal Party that actually cut \$400 million in funding to the CBC back in the nineties.

We know that CBC has declining listening and viewing audiences. There is a lack of revenues. It has not been able to get revenues from organizations. In fact, CBC has lost the contract for our National Hockey League. Now it is complaining that it does not have enough money. We are already providing the CBC well over \$1.1 billion. It needs to be able to work within its budgets and make sure that whatever programming it is providing meets Canadian needs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, that is really sad.

Honestly, I would like to go and have a beer with my colleague opposite because he obviously understands nothing. Nothing at all.

By blaming CBC/Radio-Canada for losing *Hockey Night in Canada*, my colleague is showing that he does not get it. It is absolute heresy when we know that CBC/Radio-Canada did not cut fat or muscle, but cut to the bone. We have reached that point. CBC/Radio-Canada cannot deal with this situation. It is shocking to hear such comments.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher for his strong statement today and for his motion in support of the CBC.

For those who are watching this debate, this motion:

...calls on the government to: (a) reverse the \$45 million in cuts for 2014-2015 in Budget 2012; and (b) provide adequate, stable, multi-year funding to the public broadcaster so that it can fulfill its mandate.

Let me just say first of all why we need a CBC. I want to begin with a quote from Canadian producer and director Peter Raymont. What he has said is:

I think the arts, arts programming on CBC English Television in particular, could really help revitalize the CBC. There's been very little arts programming on the CBC for quite a few years now. I think it's a great shame that the artists of Canada, the musicians and poets and writers and filmmakers of Canada haven't had their voices heard and their work seen on CBC television, and it's a vital part of Canadian culture and Canadian identity.

It is still very essential that Canadians share their stories. That is what the public broadcaster allows us to do. We need to be able to tell our stories, from every corner of this vast country, not just the big cities. I come from Toronto. My riding is Parkdale—High Park. However, we need to know the stories of big and small communities right across this country as part of our Canadian identity.

The government does not seem to like our Canadian institutions, whether it is Elections Canada, the Supreme Court, Canada Post, or now the CBC. These cuts seem to be part of a broader assault on our public institutions in Canada.

Let us face it: our national broadcaster is part of our nation-building. It is an important element of our country. We need to share our stories. There is no private sector replacement for what the CBC does. These cuts are preventing us from effectively telling our stories across this country.

What are the cuts I am talking about? The cuts we are talking about today are a direct result of the 2012 budget from the Conservatives. However, ever since coming to power, the Conservatives have had the CBC and Radio-Canada in their sites. They appointed Conservatives to top management positions and instructed them to literally take an axe to the institution.

As a direct result of the actions by the Conservative government now, but also previous Liberal governments, CBC/Radio-Canada has been weakened at the same time as it is trying to survive in an extremely competitive television market, and struggling to transform and keep up with the 21st century technology.

New Democrats question whether the CBC/Radio-Canada can actually fulfill its mandate under the current conditions, particularly in respect to the regions and minority language communities. We so badly need these voices to knit our country together and not allow us to build on our differences but rather to celebrate our differences.

It is disappointing that the new Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages seems to be pursuing the Conservative approach of abandoning this important Canadian institution.

Business of Supply

The NDP believes in the importance of our public broadcaster. CBC/Radio-Canada should have an adequate, stable budget that affords it a measure of predictability. This would make it less susceptible to the whims of the advertising market and less affected by political influence, I might say, because they would not have to be as concerned about the government of the day.

These cuts are having a huge impact on the staff at CBC. We are losing hundreds of young people, good people who are the future of our broadcasting, people who could make a huge difference for this country.

I want to just quote Linden MacIntyre, the host of *the fifth estate*, who is talking about the 657 people who will lose their jobs under these cuts.

• (1035)

He is someone who stepped down to save one more job of a young person. Mr. MacIntyre has been a Canadian treasure in his role as host of *the fifth estate*. He said:

...the 657 people are young, bright, talented and they represent the future of the CBC. If we start losing them at this point, we are losing the future. It's a tragedy, it's a human tragedy and it's an institutional tragedy and, I suppose it's not pushing it to say, it's a national tragedy.

I agree. I believe that these cuts to CBC are indeed a national tragedy. However, it is not just the Conservatives, as I said, who have been making these cuts. It should be said that while they were in power in the 1990s, the Liberals imposed cuts on CBC and Radio-Canada to the tune of \$400 million, and almost 2,500 people lost their jobs. The Chrétien era is generally accepted as the time when the troubles of the CBC and Radio-Canada began. It is on this terrible history of cuts that we are seeing these further cuts by the Conservatives today.

What does this mean to our major broadcaster? As I said, young talent is being lost, but we are also losing voices of Canadians. We are losing regional programming and diverse programming across this country and we are dropping in our ranking around the world. Among the 18 major western countries, Canada ranks 16th, third from the bottom, in terms of per capita public funding for public broadcasters, just ahead of New Zealand and the United States. That is sad testimony to the lack of support given to our public broadcaster.

This is a very important issue right across this country, but in my community and in my riding of Parkdale—High Park, it has been a huge issue. I have received hundreds and hundreds of emails, calls, and letters from community members who are very concerned about this series of cuts. I want to quote a couple of these letters. One of them, from a constituent named Joe, who is talking about now having advertising on CBC Radio. He writes:

I just heard the first ads on CBC Radio. Consider this a howl of outrage. Promise me the NDP will establish stable funding for the national public broadcaster so that we may be spared further erosion of this once-mighty institution. What's next, billboards on the side of the parliament buildings?

Joe can rest assured that the NDP will restore funding to the CBC.

I want to quote one other letter from a constituent named Cathy. She has copied me on a letter to the Prime Minister. This was about budget changes in 2012. She wrote to the Prime Minister:

Your disrespect for the intelligence of the Canadian people is transparent when you challenge the value of the CBC. At election time you suggested [you] would support continued funding for the CBC, but when handed a majority you've worked to de-construct an internationally respected network on the basis that it threatens your ideology. To lose the CBC or worse, make it a propaganda machine for any standing government is an offence to our democracy and evidence of your disassociation with the history of this vast nation and the irreplaceable role that the CBC has played in maintaining our ties as a nation. Decades of increasingly depleted funding and the staffing at upper echelons of Executive Officers prepared to dismantle the CBC, managing it as if it were a private company, continues to undermine the CBC's unique mandate to connect Canadians. Shame on you...

I thank Cathy for that letter, and I echo those words: Shame on the Prime Minister.

The NDP motion today is calling for stable, predictable, long-term funding for the CBC. Let us not attack our national broadcaster. Let us treasure it, preserve it, improve it, and leave it there for future generations for the benefit of all Canadians.

• (1040)

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to this motion, if I am going to support it, I really would like to clearly understand your definition of adequate and stable funding. Can you give me a dollar value in terms of what that is?

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

The member for Sault Ste. Marie should be aware that the questions have to be directed to the Chair, to the Speaker, not to the member the question is going to.

I am not sure if the member had completed. If not, please continue.

Mr. Bryan Hayes: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member if she would please explain what exactly, in terms of a dollar figure, adequate and stable funding is in the mind of the member opposite.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, only the government can actually direct funding from this House. The opposition cannot, in fact, identify a specific amount or dictate what we think the dollar amount should be. As he well knows, the opposition does not have that ability. We are not crafting a budget.

However, if the hon. member just waits until 2015, when the NDP is elected the Government of Canada, we will be happy to give him a dollar amount for the CBC.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer the previous question in asking my question. Why do we not bring it back to where the funding was in 2006, when the Conservative government was elected? That is a proposal.

I think any election platform will have to be fully costed, and they will have to put a dollar amount to what they want to spend on different things. I do not think that my hon. colleague's answer was sufficient. One has to say that we have put together an election platform, this is what we intend to spend, here is what it costs, here is where the revenue is going to come from, and here is our plan, with the dollars.

I want to give my hon. colleague a chance to respond to that.

Business of Supply

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I will tell the hon. member what we will not do. Unlike the Liberals, we will not cut \$400 million from the CBC and we will not lay off 2,500 hard-working employees of the CBC.

If he is patient and he waits, when we are in a federal election and have an election platform—and, as he knows, every platform is fully costed—we will lay out exactly what our plans will be for the CBC. I am sure Canadians will prefer the approach to the CBC of the New Democrats over what either the Conservative or Liberal record has been over the last 15 years.

● (1045)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague for her eloquent speech, which encapsulates the views of people in her riding.

I would also like to point out that, quite clearly, the other parties are not really taking seriously what \$45 million means. Canada has a population of roughly 30 million people. That \$45 million would add \$1.50 per person. The debate is clear. We give \$29 per Canadian. Previously, we gave \$34. It is not too hard to do the math. I think the Conservatives know how to count.

I would like to ask my colleague what she believes is motivating people. In fact, 25,000 people signed the NDP petition. Why are these people so passionate about their public broadcaster?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, once again I would like to thank my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher for his question and his efforts on behalf of CBC/Radio-Canada.

What is motivating the people in my riding is their pride in Canada. It is their passion for communication, the arts, information and the news. They like the information they get from CBC/Radio-Canada, which is impartial—which is not the case in the private sector—reaches every corner of our country and represents all Canadians.

I think it is this pride and passion for our country that is really behind the support for CBC/Radio-Canada. That is why it is so important to adequately fund this public institution.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion put forth by my colleague from the NDP. It should be highlighted immediately that the relationship between the government and CBC/Radio-Canada is an arm's-length relationship, and there are good reasons for that. I am going to spend a bit of time clarifying exactly what the nature of that relationship is.

I will begin with a reminder of the origin of the CBC. When the corporation was created way back in 1936, Parliament provisioned for a great level of autonomy from government to ensure independence in its program decisions and freedom from the type of political interference the opposition is trying to display today. Since then, and over the years, the Broadcasting Act, the legislation governing the corporation, has been amended a number of times to adapt to the changing broadcasting landscape. These various

amendments were made in full respect of the necessary arm's-length relationship between the CBC and the Government of Canada.

It is important to take a few moments to speak about how the board's strategic guidance impacts the CBC. However, first it is important to acknowledge that there is a relationship that is defined by the fundamental freedom of expression that is a cornerstone of our Canadian democracy.

The CBC's independence is explicitly underscored in three sections of the Broadcasting Act. It states:

The Corporation shall, in the pursuit of its objects and in the exercise of its powers, enjoy freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence.

The corporation reports to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage. It is governed by a board of directors comprising 12 individuals, including the chairperson and the president, who are appointed by the Governor in Council. The board provides overall stewardship of the corporation. It is responsible for the fulfillment of the mandate and for directing the business, activities, and affairs of the corporation. It holds its senior management accountable for its performance. It is also responsible for providing strategic guidance to the CBC.

The public broadcaster's current five-year strategic plan is an example of how the board interprets its public mandate and provides guidance to the CBC in developing media strategies, programming, and other initiatives.

The CBC's mandate states that:

(l) the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as the national public broadcaster, should provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains;

(m) the programming provided by the Corporation should

(i) be predominantly and distinctively Canadian,

(ii) reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions,

(iii) actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression,

(iv) be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities,

(v) strive to be of equivalent quality in English and in French,

(vi) contribute to shared national consciousness and identity,

(vii) be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the purpose, and

(viii) reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of [our country];

To provide Canadians with a wide range of Canadian cultural programs, the public broadcaster must provide content on multiple media platforms. Canadians expect to have access to media content at the time and place of their choosing, be it on mobile devices or on their television sets or with video on demand. They also want to contribute content, to participate, and be able to express their own personal opinions.

Business of Supply

The CBC must strive to meet those needs by focusing on creating and delivering original and innovative high-quality Canadian content, by reflecting and bringing together Canadians with regional and national programming, and by engaging with Canadian audiences through special events such as town halls. Most importantly, the CBC must strive to be cost-effective, transparent, and accountable, which is something I hope the leader of the NDP is going to be at committee in about 10 minutes. The CBC must offer high-quality national programs that inform, enlighten, and entertain Canadians, just as its mandate requires it to do.

● (1050)

The CBC carves out spaces, forums, and opportunities for Canadians to connect with one another to share stories, experiences, and opinions. It must maintain and, where applicable, increase its presence in regions, and it must continue to do so in an innovative fashion, using all or some of its various services, depending on specific circumstances.

It must seek to reach communities that do not have access to many channels or cultural services. It also offers news programming produced in each particular region. The CBC has expanded its reach into underserved communities, such as Kelowna, Hamilton, the northern suburbs of Montreal, and Newfoundland.

The CBC is also investing in digital programming and is recognized as a leader in digital offerings with its news websites and with innovative applications such as TOU.TV and the CBC Music web portal. The corporation now offers a broad suite of digital programming that can be accessible to Canadians when and as they want it.

Digital programming can also mean an increased presence in regions. The corporation must continue to strive to be present in regions with digital media and offer Canadian content during prime time.

Like all broadcasters, the corporation continues to seek to diversify and to increase revenues. The CBC should continue to form partnerships and pursue other avenues to maximize its resources.

The corporation is responsible for establishing performance indicators to monitor how well, according to Canadians, its programming and services fulfill the main elements of its mandate. Our government strongly supports the emphasis the corporation is placing on measuring its performance, as it is imperative that all corporations demonstrate the results they achieve with Canadian taxpayer dollars.

In terms of meeting its specific mandate, according to recent surveys commissioned by the corporation, CBC's English- and French-language radio and television services scored an average of 8 out of 10 for being informative, enlightening, entertaining, and available on new platforms. When Canadians were asked how English and French services fare against the corporation's strategic priorities, it received an average of 8 out of 10 for being of high quality, distinctive, diversified, and reflecting all of Canada's regions.

Like all broadcasters, the corporation continues to measure audience share, revenue, subscribers, production costs, and adoption

of its new platforms. It is noteworthy that results include the performance of French television, its network radio services, and its progress on digital platforms.

On the other hand, the CBC must find ways of attracting Canadians aged 25 to 54, a demographic that has slipped from the corporation and is continuing to slip. It is a key demographic sought by all television advertisers. It is its decline in viewership and the decline of advertising revenue that is first and foremost causing these challenges at the CBC.

To conclude this example of governance, it is critical to underscore that the corporation is responsible for its day-to-day operations, including its strategic objectives, and it is up to CBC, in terms of those objectives, to ensure that its strategic plans are fulfilled and the needs of Canadians are met.

The president, as chief executive officer at the head of the senior executive team, is responsible for the overall management of the corporation. He at this point is accountable to the board of directors for the efficient operation of the corporation in accordance with the plans and priorities established by the board itself.

The board of directors has a proper mix of skills and experience to actually manage the CBC, and it is their responsibility to ensure it fulfills its mandate. Considering the legislative framework and regulations surrounding the broadcasting sector, it is also important to know that the board fulfills its roles and its responsibilities. The board has the knowledge, skills, and experience required to do a proper job in the legal, media, accounting, community, and business sectors.

I would now like to get back to the nature of the arm's-length relationship with the government and what it means in terms of accountability to Parliament and, most importantly, to the Canadian public.

The Financial Administration Act governs the administration of public funds. Part of the act provides a broad and accountable framework through which most crown corporations normally engage with the government. However, in this case, the CBC is exempted from some sections of part X of the Financial Administration Act.

● (1055)

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation shares this exemption with a very select number of crown corporations. This exemption was put in place to ensure that some cultural activities and decisions are free from political involvement.

While this exemption from portions of the Financial Administration Act give the corporation a high level of autonomy from government, it still must comply with key reporting requirements that apply to all federal corporations as well as comply with the Broadcasting Act, which is its own legislation, or other legislation such as the Access to Information Act, the Privacy Act, and labour laws, among others.

Every year the corporation informs government what it intends to do by submitting to the responsible minister, for information only, a corporate plan with a five-year outlook. A summary of the plan and the annual operating and capital budgets are tabled each and every year before Parliament.

Business of Supply

Like every other broadcaster in Canada, the CBC has to comply with regulations set by the CRTC. In addition, the CRTC establishes specific licensing conditions for the CBC and Radio-Canada television and radio services in order to encourage the national public broadcaster to deliver on key elements of its mandate and contribute to a strong Canadian broadcasting system.

To give even more strength to the crown corporation's accountability to Canadians, our government in 2007 expanded the scope of the Access to Information Act so that more federal organizations, including the CBC, are required to respond to information requests. It also brought the corporation under proactive disclosure requirements, which means that the travel and hospitality expenses of its executives and members of its board must be published online on a quarterly basis. We expect the CBC to fully comply with the requirements under that act.

We went even further to encourage an exchange between Canadians and the board of crown corporations. To encourage the CBC to engage directly with Canadians and to provide Canadians with an opportunity to speak with the boards, in 2009 our government added requirements to the Financial Administration Act that crown corporations hold annual public meetings. The purpose of these public meetings is to give the public an opportunity to witness, to ask questions, and to express concerns on the programming direction, the fiscal management, and the overall stewardship of the CBC.

As principal stewards of the corporation, the chair, the president and chief executive officer, and the chief financial officer must attend board meetings. They are expected to speak to the plans and spending of the corporation over the previous year and to its future direction.

There are also mechanisms for Canadians to pursue complaints about CBC/Radio-Canada's news or public affairs coverage. They can contact the corporation directly through any of its stations or through the head office here in Ottawa.

CBC ombudsmen review complaints regarding all of the areas upon which Canadians seek clarification or register a complaint. They do so regarding journalistic and current affairs material. The ombudsmen determine whether the journalistic process or the radio, television, or Internet content involved in a complaint does in fact violate the corporation's journalistic policies.

The ombudsmen are independent of the corporation's program staff and its management. After investigating complaints, the ombudsmen report their findings directly to the president and CEO of the CBC through to its board of directors.

Our government believes it is important that Canadians have direct avenues to hold the CBC to account. The CBC receives a significant amount of funding from taxpayers, over \$1 billion each and every year, from the budget that Canadian taxpayers fund to run the Government of Canada and its subsidiary organizations. It receives both direct and indirect funding. It is sufficient, as the president and the chair of the board of directors have acknowledged, to fulfill its public mandate to reach Canadians as described in the Broadcasting Act.

Canadian audiences now have a number of electronic high-tech devices and hundreds of television and radio services that allow greater freedom to choose and access the content that they want.

The CBC must continue to invest in programs and platforms that Canadians want to invest their time in watching. It has the independence to decide how best to invest the funds that it receives from taxpayers, through Parliament, to achieve its mandate.

The corporation has operated and will continue to operate at arm's length from government. The corporation's reporting obligations are necessary to ensure the CBC remains accountable to all Canadians and delivers quality programming that Canadians want to enjoy.

• (1100)

As I conclude, it is imperative that Canadians understand that when we went through an extremely difficult time of a global recession in 2008 and 2009, this government was in a position to be able to respond to what was happening within this country and around the world in a way that put people to work, in a way that created investments in this country, in a way that was able to put us in a position far superior to those of most other countries in the world in terms of working through that recession.

Part of what we asked of every single department, ministry, and corporation was to participate in ensuring that we brought the Canadian government and its subsidiaries back to a balanced position in a responsible and productive way that allowed those corporations, those arm's-length agencies, as well as our ministries and departments in a fashion that was accommodating to them and that would both maintain the delivery of service in this country and enable us to reach a balanced budget. We did not ask any one ministry or corporation to do more than another. We asked all to join and do the same in a prescribed and determined effort to get this country back in a state of a positive budgetary process and a state of positive management, understanding, and style that are allowing us in the very near future to go back into balanced budgets in a way that no other government has done before under its mission and determination.

If we go across the country and ask Canadians on an individual basis, they would say that the delivery of service they are receiving from the federal government has not changed and has in fact improved since 2006.

Under that mandate, the CBC is working, is determined, and is giving every effort that it possibly can to join with the government and Canadians to ensure that its product is top notch, is one that people understand, and is one that they understand has a financial capacity and accountability.

I would tell the House today that the CBC is doing its job. There is no doubt that it is struggling. The mandate upon which it was structured, which was based upon how people interpreted broadcasting in 1936, is completely different in 2014. There is not an entity or corporation that delivers this type of service that is not struggling and is not determined to find a way to work through the issues of viewership and the demand the public is putting forward today onto those who provide those services.

The CBC is doing its job. We should continue to let it do its job and understand and fulfill its mandate.

Business of Supply

•(1105)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I found myself agreeing with some of the member's points. He was supporting our argument on this side. He talked about the importance of regions and about the need for funding to support regions and about the mandate. Those are very important. Those are good facts that he put forward on the record.

Some facts to come back to are that following the 2012 budget, we saw that the cuts to public funding left the budget at \$1.025 billion. To give members some context on the record, in 1996 the corporation received \$1.07 billion. Therefore, we have seen the funding cut since 2012 versus 1996, where we saw major cuts from the previous government.

Then the 2014 budget cuts were \$82 million for English, \$42 million for French services, and \$4.7 million for corporate services.

Those are just some facts on the table.

I want to leave the member with this question. Current River councillor Andrew Foulds, who represents a ward in Thunder Bay, is concerned about the regional representation that my colleague put on the record. He said the city is calling on the CBC to cancel all programming staff cuts in Thunder Bay and he sent a resolution of the council to the government.

What does the member say to people like Andrew Foulds, who is representing his community, about the fact that these cuts would hurt the regional representation that the member put on the record as being the mandate of the CBC?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments, and certainly I understand that everyone in our country has the ability to formally register a compliment or concern. If we look back over the corporation's history since 1936, I do not think that the matters he is suggesting are new to the House of Commons or are new among the concerns the CBC faces on a daily and yearly basis.

It is the CBC's mandate to implement programming based on its requirements under legislation and regulation. It is the CBC's board, president, and chairman who have the responsibility to respond to the very concerns the member raises. The government's responsibility is to ensure that the implementation of that legislation and regulation is thoroughly followed, and we get those results back from the CBC on a yearly basis. However, the determination of programming, direction, and what the CBC is going to do in terms of delivery of service is its mandate.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague, the member for St. Catharines and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, for his speech. He reiterated and reminded members of the commitment the Canadian government—and particularly our government—has made to providing stable funding to CBC.

My colleague also explained that the challenges facing CBC are not related to stable funding from the Canadian government, but to

external factors, such as the loss of hockey contracts and declining advertising revenue.

My question for him is this: what challenges does CBC face in a competitive environment in which it is up against private companies for advertising revenue and major contracts?

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary. You have one minute.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of Public Safety for his thoughtful question and also for giving me the opportunity to, very quickly, respond.

CBC is facing challenges, just as all other networks in the country are, whether they are delivering radio service, delivering television service, or delivering online. The world is changing. The demographics at CBC are that individuals aged 25 to 52 are decreasing at an alarming rate. The fact that *Hockey Night in Canada*, which is something CBC has delivered for years, is now going to be delivered by Rogers Corporation, which has taken that over, will have a huge impact on the revenue and roles and responsibilities of the CBC.

Those are two areas that are of huge concern to the CBC. In fact, they are bigger concerns, I would imagine, than whether or not it is receiving whatever revenue it receives from the federal government. The issue that CBC faces is viewership and declining revenues from its advertising, which it needs to address and is attempting to.

•(1110)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak about CBC/Radio-Canada, for very important reasons. Our public broadcaster has been a stalwart for this country in building its culture from coast to coast to coast. I have always said that people say CBC is vital for regional programming, where it has served for many years.

We have parallel situations, of course. We have the private sector and we have the public sector, meaning the CBC. When we look at many of the smaller markets where the private sector could not survive on its own, the CBC provided that vital service. I speak specifically of CBC North as a prime example. In my province of Newfoundland and Labrador, it provided a service in Labrador in places where it was not obtainable through the private sector.

As I look back at both Radio-Canada and the CBC, I look at how they provided a national conversation and a national understanding. Before the days when we could talk to each other with a small mobile device, our way of communicating with each other was through a public broadcaster.

Business of Supply

I remember as a child growing up in the late 1970s and early 1980s watching the CBC. There was no thousand-channel universe at that point, and we did not have a computer or the Internet to use; television and radio were the only ways. Therefore, our conversation took place through the viewing of television and the making of documentaries and information programming, primarily provided by the CBC. There were no specialty channels back then, so we had our main broadcast channels, such as CTV, Global, and the affiliate, and we had the CBC and its regional station in addition to the American broadcasters, which came over the border and through cable.

At the time, I remember watching the traditions of organ-making for churches in Quebec. I had never really known about it. I remember writing about it in high school. I wrote about how Quebec was famous worldwide for developing these large pipe organs in churches. I had not known that. Here I was, a young child in Newfoundland and Labrador, learning about what was a tradition in the province of Quebec. I learned about Bonhomme and the Carnaval de Québec through CBC. I was not in Quebec, but I learned about it.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, I learned about the majestic mountains of British Columbia through the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I also learned about Canada's north and the 24-hour sun, the 24-hour daylight, through the CBC.

In the course of growing up in a small province on the eastern coast of this country, on a small island, in the days when communications were not as prolific as they are now and certainly not prevalent by any stretch, all we had were three or four channels. The CBC was my window to my country. Not only was it the ability to see the country; it was the ability to converse with the rest of the country.

Later, when I grew up, I joined the Royal Canadian Air Cadets. I joined the air cadets and got to see the country that I had seen on television. I travelled to Alberta. I travelled to Nova Scotia and these areas. I had a genuine interest in doing that because I had seen the country laid out in front of me on a small television screen. I got to see the majestic mountains of both western Alberta and British Columbia in person, and I was astounded by them. If it had not been for our national public broadcaster, I never would have really appreciated what I was about to see, and I never would have had a genuine interest to see it.

This is what our public broadcaster has done. Through the years, it has provided us with a yearning to be Canadian in all facets of this country.

• (1115)

Let us not forget one of the greatest institutions alive in this country. That is *Hockey Night in Canada*. It was formerly *La Soirée du hockey*.

For a child growing up in Newfoundland and Labrador, the upbringing was not that much different from growing up in Trois-Rivières. I grew up in the small town of Bishop's Falls. On Saturday, I would go and play hockey at the local arena, but I certainly would not miss *Hockey Night in Canada*. I am sure for kids growing up in Trois-Rivières, Saint-Jean, or other small towns in Quebec, it certainly would not have been dissimilar.

Our public broadcaster united us in what we had a passion for, whether we were children, teenagers, or adults, as we are today. However, the public broadcaster has had challenges. It has had budgetary challenges through the years, as the Government of Canada has had budgetary challenges over the years. I could say the same for the National Film Board, given what it is going through.

What we must not forget is the genuine understanding that our public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada, is still vital to us today to make sure we share these conversations across this country. We want to know what is happening in Canada's north. We want to see what is happening in Canada's north. We want to hear what is happening in Canada's north.

Let us not forget another element of CBC/Radio-Canada. We pushed Canada out to the world through short wave radio service for many years. We were a pillar for shortwave radio, with our ability to communicate around the world and spread our message to billions of people in China or India and throughout the United States of America. We had a service similar to its public radio, NPR, but ours was more challenging because we only have 30 million people right now, and in those days we had about 20 million people, trying to support this service that went from coast to coast to coast.

Let me go back to my original point. It is not just about having local stations, which are very vital and important, but what the CBC did, secondly and just as importantly, was allow a small child in Newfoundland and Labrador to experience the country through French Canadians in Quebec, French Canadians in New Brunswick, English Canadians in British Columbia and Alberta, and of course through many aboriginal groups across this country. The conversation was shared.

There are institutions in this country that are famous, and not just by themselves. Let me use an example I used previously, the Carnaval in Quebec City. It is a fantastic event. Its mascot, Bonhomme, is famous. It is not just a Quebec phenomenon. I always wanted to meet Bonhomme, and I had never been to Quebec at that point.

Many citizens in this country want to meet Bonhomme, and they know Bonhomme because of our public broadcaster. That is why. It is because we had a conversation between French Canada and English Canada. In doing so, we got to share its triumphs, such as last night, when the Montreal Canadiens won game seven. That is not a bad admission, given the fact that I am Boston Bruins fan.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Scott Simms: Do not boo, because we lost. Seriously, we cannot rub it in any more than what it is. That is the passion we share.

As a child, I loved watching baseball. If I could bring the Montreal Expos back, I would bring them back tomorrow. God love them. The issue is not just about baseball or the Carnaval or the hockey that we share. The issue here, if I may steal something from a Canadian intellectual, the late Marshall McLuhan, is that the medium is the message.

Business of Supply

Today, that is exactly why we are debating this. It is the medium that brought us the message of Canada. That medium is not just about radio, not just about television, not just about the Net or any social media out there, but it is about the existence of public broadcasting.

• (1120)

What worries me is there is a change in ideology. I know that once I sit down, I will be questioned about cuts that happened in the 1990s. I am well aware of that. There were budgetary constraints. The Liberals were under pressure to wrestle a massive deficit and tough decisions were made. It was not just the CBC that was affected. Other tough decisions had to be made as well. However, we never lost sight of the fact that public broadcasting was vital to our country. Funding was stabilized once the budget was back into balance.

What worries me, however, and I hope it is highlighted in this debate, is an ideology is creeping in that dictates, "Why should I pay for public broadcasting when private broadcasting can fill that space?" Through you, Mr. Speaker, to all my colleagues in the House, that is the most dangerous attitude we can have against any semblance of public broadcasting.

I believe that our private broadcasters are doing a wonderful service to our country. They donate to the Canada Media Fund, which is a wonderful program providing movies, documentaries, and funding for all these things that tell our story, not only to each other but to the world. However, our public broadcasting is incredibly sacrosanct.

I would like to talk about some of the issues of recent time. I noticed the motion itself calls for multi-year funding to the public broadcasters so it can fulfill its mandate. Indeed, in the last couple of elections we talked about that. It is really the only way we can go about doing this. The BBC does it, and it does it well. If members noticed, some of the best programming in drama is now coming from the BBC, a public broadcaster. One of the greatest worldwide news services, the most respected, is the BBC. We must look to other models around the world, and the BBC is one example, especially when it comes to multi-year funding.

I want to talk briefly about CBC/Radio-Canada and its history through the years.

It has been said that through 1920s, there was a proliferation of private radio stations in our country, but we also had a lot of private radio stations streaming across the border. The origins of public broadcasting are not dissimilar from the origins of public broadcasting around the world, which is to say that we need to protect our message here. This is becoming more difficult because of the regulations in place to help protect our Canadian culture, like Canadian content rules allowing certain channels on the satellite spectrum. There are certain regulations, but a lot of people are now able to get around that because of technology.

By way of example, there is Netflix, or what is called an over-the-top broadcaster, essentially, through the Internet, because the CRTC does not regulate the Internet. Therefore, content is now streamed through our computers. We can get copies from iTunes and these sorts of things. There is a fundamental shift in content and how we

deal with content now. We will have to subsidize content in the future, but in the meantime, the CBC started with the very basics of protecting our own culture.

In 1928, it established a royal commission to advise on the future of broadcasting in Canada.

Going ahead to the 1940s, the national public broadcaster took off.

In 1941, CBC news service was formally opened. Radio-Canada's news division was also created. As the next decade approached, getting into the 1950s, television was on the horizon and CBC/Radio-Canada was preparing.

In 1947, the corporation presented a 15-year plan for the development of television in Canada.

Throughout the 1950s, CBLT Toronto and CBFT Montreal began broadcasting.

In 1955, television services were available to 66% of the Canadian population. That is a pretty big goal and accomplishment for a country with a few million people, the second-largest country in the world, and most of this stuff was over-the-air transmissions.

• (1125)

In the 1960s, the regulatory framework was refined. The CRTC formally took over as the regulator. Before that, the CBC handled it.

In 1968, the new Broadcasting Act confirmed CBC/Radio-Canada's role in providing the national service. Therefore, 1968 was the year when we said that we had a national broadcaster, a public broadcaster, and, therefore, it should be enshrined and protected.

Recently, however, due to cuts, the CBC had to make some fundamental decisions on its service. It had to manage \$390 million in financial pressures since 2009. Overall, these reductions have affected the equivalent of 2,107 full-time positions.

We talked about some of the numbers earlier in this debate. For people are just tuning in now, I would like to repeat some of those numbers because it is very vital that we do so. A lot of people think we may spend too much on public broadcasting, but let us put it into perspective. Each Canadian pays \$29 per year for the combined services, CBC/Radio-Canada, but the worldwide average in other nations is \$82. Of the 18 countries that invest heavily in public broadcasting, we are at number 16. Therefore, there is room to grow.

Again, I go back to what was in the original motion. We also have to provide a model for multi-year funding.

The services offered now to Canadians include 88 radio stations, 27 television stations, three all-digital services, two specialty television news services, RDI, CBC News Network, three other specialty television services, and 11 other services, including music channels and services in two official languages across six time zones. Therefore, we get the vastness of what our public broadcaster has to accomplish.

Business of Supply

The 1980s saw a tremendous growth in the number of private and specialty channels. We went from a four- or five-channel universe to about a 60-channel universe in the 1980s, with American channels being the most prolific at the time, the CNNs of the world. We followed suit with Newsworld, which it was called at the time, the CBC component of an all-news channel. CTV did much the same. We had TSN as well as the Weather Network, MétéoMedia en français.

The corporation continues to push ahead this multi-channel universe. Throughout the 1990s, it was much of the same. All of a sudden we find ourselves now in the proliferation of not just channels but platforms. Therefore, we move into the digital world, providing content. The way we consume our entertainment through digital devices has changed dramatically. Tonight's *Hockey Night in Canada* starts at 7 p.m., 7:30 p.m. Newfoundland time.

Basically, we are moving out of making appointments to see entertainment. What we are doing now is downloading content in our digital world. Whether it is to save it to view it another time or to stream it from a cloud or from the central service that is provided. CBC, our public broadcaster, has to fit its way into that.

However, what is interesting about that is it also provides a great deal of opportunities. Through one of these providers, lately I have downloaded—and paid for it, I might add—several programs that originated with the BBC. One has to wonder, with the BBC providing this content, if we could do much the same.

However, we have to get serious about content, and that is a conversation and a debate we should have in the future about not only the CBC but the National Film Board and the Canada Media Fund. We can look at Canadian content.

I thank the hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher for bringing forward the motion. I hope the debate will be a fruitful one, despite the vote. We pretty much know how the vote will go, but in the course of this conversation, we can talk about fundamental reasons why we like our public broadcaster and how we can improve it, given technology today.

● (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his testimony. I think it was more of a testimony than a speech, and I was particularly touched by the emotional aspect, since I watched *La Soirée du hockey* as a young boy in Trois-Rivières. I also watched *Les Beaux dimanches* and shows like *Rencontres*, which we never would have been able to see or been allowed to watch on a private network.

I think this shows just how important our public broadcaster is. CBC gave us a picture of this vast country that was much more accurate than the map on the “Canada” notebooks I was using at that age.

I must point out, though, that the member's party began these massive funding cuts to CBC, which is how we have ended up where we are now. When we know that we are rank 16th out of 18 in terms of funding for public television, I think that reversing the \$45 million in cuts is just the beginning.

I want to know whether my colleague thinks it is necessary that we bring ourselves closer at least to the world average for public television funding in the coming years.

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, yes, I think it is. By way of illustration, if I may continue with my testimony, over the next little while we anticipate getting from that dollar value to a world average, which is about \$88. That is a substantial amount. That is more than double what we are doing right now.

The models we could use in other nations may dictate. It is more expensive for us because of revenue sources. We are not in a country that is relatively the same size. Let us take a look at places like Switzerland and those areas. They do not have to broadcast to a much larger geography; however, that gap is now decreasing, given digital and satellite technology. There is room to grow in that part.

The member mentioned \$45 million in cuts to be restored, which is true. However, the most important part of this has to deal with the fact that it is a multi-year model for funding. This is the most vital part of the motion that all parties should consider doing.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing is a change in market demand, and we see that in other industries. A good example is that Kellogg's food recently shut one of its plants because the demand for certain types of breakfast cereal around the world shifted and there was no longer that demand.

I believe the government is providing significant funding to CBC, but the entertainment preferences of Canadians is changing. I like *Murdoch Mysteries*, a great show. I listen to the CBC when I have the opportunity to drive from Ottawa to my riding of Cambridge. However, I am curious about the timing of the motion.

Speaking of testimony, we had the Leader of the Opposition being hauled before a committee to provide testimony on the alleged misuse of taxpayer dollars. Is this a ploy for the NDP to find favourable journalistic coverage by CBC on this apparent misuse of taxpayer dollars?

● (1135)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I came here today to talk about public broadcasting, quite frankly. With all due respect to my colleague, I have no interest in answering that question.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my very honourable colleague from across the way talked about changing entertainment preferences. However, my favourite program on CBC Radio when I was growing up was *Quirks & Quarks*, which is still going on. It is a testimony to how much people like it and how it has inspired a lot of people to go into science and engineering, something our economy needs.

Business of Supply

We should be talking to people all across Canada about nature, about how things work, about the importance of science, engineering and technology in our everyday lives, without selling toys and sugary cereals, focusing on science, why it is so interesting and why people should think about a career in science and technology. Could my colleague from Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor tell us about the importance of that to our country?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I am impressed with the member's question.

He illustrates a very good point of this motion, about the multi-year funding, because there is the responsibility of our public broadcaster to raise money through revenues. Bidding for the Olympics is not a cheap thing, but it is great that our public broadcaster can cover the Olympics and hockey and that sort of thing. I know that now it is different with the contract going to the private sector. However, to provide programming that is illustrative of who we are as Canadians, for education purposes and also for entertainment, and to be serious about providing something that is not always achieving the biggest number of viewers, we have to do something that enriches our nation. Multi-year funding will go a long way in doing that. It allows the broadcaster to make these plans so that programs like *Quirks and Quarks*, which he is a fan of and continues to be today because it is a great program, can continue. That is fundamental in this debate.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his testimony about the impact of the CBC on him and his community and how it brings Canadians together.

I have this question for the member. As well as representing greater diversity, does a public broadcaster also have an important role to play as an independent news source? Can he tell us if he thinks it is vital to have a public broadcaster to ensure full freedom of the press?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, yes, absolutely I do. I thank the member for Parkdale—High Park for the question. I used to live in her riding and I know a lot of CBC employees live there as well. I was in private broadcasting, I was part of the *MétéoMédia/The Weather Network*, which is regulated but private. When I would go and do stories and be associated with the CBC, I found the people very respectful of the journalistic standards put out there.

I will give an example. The Senate is doing a study on the CBC and requested that its anchor, Peter Mansbridge, appear, and the president wrote back to say, "We must decline your invitation to Mr. Mansbridge. It is not appropriate for journalists, whose job includes reporting on the activities of Senators, to be questioned by those same Senators at a Parliamentary Committee." This is a good thing. It is proof that the CBC does live up to those journalistic standards and ethics, and if it does not, we have the ombudsman to go through and act as a mechanism by which that can be rectified.

However, recent debates do alarm me. In response to the Senate demand of getting Mr. Mansbridge in, it proves that there has to be that separation in place and we must not micromanage in this particular area.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what an honour it is to rise today in the House to speak to a fantastic motion on the CBC, moved by my party, the NDP. People may not know this, but I am a journalist by training. I will share my time with the great member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

This is about information and freedom of the press, as well as the extraordinary work done by journalists, whose situation is becoming increasingly precarious. Friends often tell me just how difficult it is to be a journalist every day, on many levels. Today, frankly, 10 minutes will not be enough time to say how much the NDP wants to support them and that we care about the CBC and we believe in it.

My colleagues spoke a little about what the CBC means to them. Personally, I am a big fan of Radio-Canada. I watch programs like *Enquête* and *Découvertes*. I also listen to radio programs. I could not go without mentioning *À la semaine prochaine*, a funny political program that helps me take things a little less seriously each week, when we find that the Conservatives are steamrolling over us.

I rise in the House to support this NDP motion that reminds us that the CBC plays a fundamental role in informing, entertaining and uniting Canadians from coast to coast. This role has been jeopardized, mainly because of the many rounds of cuts in the past 20 years, which is why we are asking the government to reverse the \$45 million in cuts for 2014-15 in budget 2012 and provide adequate, stable, multi-year funding to the public broadcaster so that it can fulfill its mandate.

For the third time in four years, the CBC has announced significant budget cuts of over \$130 million, which translates into 657 positions. Eleven positions will be cut in Québec, my riding. The CBC's situation is so precarious and difficult that 11 positions in Québec are threatened.

The CBC is at the heart of our cultural ecosystem. It broadcasts programs that are made here and acts as a showcase for creators in all sorts of disciplines. The CBC is also a partner in broadcasting many arts events.

Given these cuts, we are wondering whether the CBC will be able to fulfill its mandate, particularly when it comes to Canada's regions and linguistic minority communities. I am particularly concerned about the regions and linguistic minority communities. They will be harder hit by these cuts, to the point where it will be difficult for them to recover because of the problems the cuts will cause.

In this era of media concentration and cross-media ownership, Canadians need to be able to count on an independent and impartial source of information. We cannot stress enough how important this is. We have seen the importance of public broadcasting in recent years. Without shows such as *Enquête*, the Charbonneau commission would never have happened. This is one of the most striking examples of the strong and meaningful contribution the CBC makes to our country's democratic health.

Business of Supply

Democracy can never be taken for granted. We work every day to make it real and meaningful. That includes freedom of the press.

I would like to make another important point. I read *Time for Outrage!* by the late Stéphane Hessel. In it, he said that any attack on freedom of the press, or an independent press, erodes the health of our democracy. It is really a step in the wrong direction. Sometimes, we come to this realization too late.

• (1145)

That is why we are sending out a warning today. The government needs to wake up. Today, we want people across Canada to understand this motion and join their voices with ours because it is important to stand up and say, in social media and other forums, that we care about the CBC. One more opinion is never one too many. That is part of democracy.

Alain Gravel, a journalist and the host of the television show *Enquête*, said:

Today, about 25 people make up the *Enquête* team. That may seem like a lot, but it is not too many for what we do. We do not keep track of our hours and everyone who works here is extremely dedicated. Conducting investigations takes time and an organizational structure that supports our work. Losing staff will definitely have an impact on our work.

Mr. Gravel goes on to say:

We, along with other investigative news teams, have helped to save Canadians tens of millions of dollars by uncovering corruption [which can happen at any time]. The first year we did the show, the City of Montreal announced that the cost of major public projects had dropped by 30% even before the police had investigated, simply through the power of information.

Alex Levasseur, president of the Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada, said:

At the end of the day, it is the younger people who will have to leave. However..., when all is said and done..., this means cutting a team that works and delivers results.

The Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec wants a public debate on the CBC's role. Brian Myles, vice-president of the FPJQ, said:

It seems the Conservative government wants to let the CBC die a slow death.

One cut at a time. This is the third time, and that is why we are saying enough is enough.

Actually, ever since they came to power, the Conservatives have been targeting the CBC. Everyone can see that. They appointed Conservatives to top management positions and basically instructed them to take an axe to the institution.

The CBC sports service has also been hard hit by cuts. Fifty hours of original sports programming are being cut. The CBC used to take a special interest in amateur sports. When Louis Lalande, executive vice-president of the CBC's French-language services, was asked about future broadcasts of the games of Université Laval's football team, Rouge et Or, he did not seem very optimistic in his answer:

It will be very difficult because we can no longer afford to have the same level of daytime programming as we do now.

The CBC is one of the least subsidized public broadcasters in the world. The CBC costs every Canadian \$29 a year, whereas the BBC, for instance, receives about \$111 per capita. That is unbelievable. Our broadcaster is one of the least subsidized broadcasters.

I look at the figures, and when we compare ourselves to other countries, the difference is unbelievable. Our broadcaster is receiving less and less funding. Of course this will affect the quality of information and Canadians' access to this information. That is what bothers me the most. The Conservatives are not able to understand that informed citizens are citizens who actively participate in their democracy, and that is what we want.

There needs to be more public education so that people can react to what is happening. We know that the Conservatives are out to destroy that because they do not want to be challenged. This situation is the result of the Conservative and Liberal governments gradually abandoning our public broadcaster.

The NDP feels that public broadcasting is important. Our motion is not asking for more funding, far from it. Instead, we want to stop the cuts so that the corporation can receive stable, adequate and predictable funding.

By making its budget more predictable, CBC would be able to cope with fluctuations in the current market. In return, we will continue to expect the corporation to meet the highest management and accountability standards, as is the case with all other crown corporations.

• (1150)

We can never stress enough how important it is to support our public broadcaster. The people at CBC have my full support, and I invite all Canadians to express how much they care about CBC. They should contact their MP and tell him or her that it is important to support our journalists.

[English]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard a lot in that speech. I did not hear a whole lot of content. I heard a lot of ideology. I heard a lot of accusations. I heard a lot of threats. However, I did not hear any resolve as to the importance of CBC and its meaning and purpose to Canadians.

Instead of talking about funding, because part of her speech was about the delivery of service CBC provides, could she stand in her place and provide two clear recommendations to the CBC on how it can better refine and define itself in this age of delivery of television services that the CBC could actually use?

She is telling us how great the CBC is. Where is the advice? Where is the help? Where is the assistance? What are the two major principles she believes the CBC should embark upon to solve the crisis and difficulties it is facing right now?

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, CBC is doing a lot with the little bit it has, so reversing the \$45 million in cuts is the very least that can be done. We know that the Conservatives will be sitting on a nice big surplus next year. They are probably sitting on one right now.

Business of Supply

I know that for every dollar invested in the cultural industry, \$3 or \$4 gets injected back into the system. Not understanding that it is important to invest in our cultural industry is therefore very short-sighted. This is also a question of identity. Everyone has a story about the CBC. This is about essential services, and public broadcasting is one of them. Support for these services can continue as they are currently, without endless cuts.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about cuts to Radio-Canada in her riding, Quebec City, and there have been cuts in Montreal and Trois-Rivières too. Trois-Rivières is a big city, but not quite as big as Montreal and Quebec City.

What I am trying to show is that the “Radio-Canadian” network is nationwide. The same goes for Canada Post, which has an amazing network across the whole country.

Can my colleague comment on the Conservatives' vision, which is most likely informed by a desire to privatize broadcasting and eliminate the amazing networks that people have woven over the years, networks that enable all Canadians, from sea to sea, to see a reflection of themselves in these institutions? Alas, that reflection is not as clear as it once was.

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I do not know how many MPs here represent the regions or how many represent urban areas but are from regions like the one I am from, the lower St. Lawrence.

What I do know is that people get regional news from the CBC, which tells people what is going on in their region. It is the leading broadcaster, and this job simply cannot be left solely to the private sector and at the mercy of the market and the whims of advertisers. We must support the CBC in our regions across the country because the broadcaster helps us connect with others.

It also enables francophone communities to connect and find out what they have in common. The government wants to divide and conquer, but there are many ways for us to discover that we have a lot more in common than what others would have us believe. That is what the CBC does.

• (1155)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech by my colleague. I would simply tell her that I have been listening to and watching the public broadcaster for a lot longer than she has, for biological reasons. My question for her is quite simple. I would like to know whether she agrees with me.

According to CBC's President Hubert Lacroix, the broadcaster's current revenue losses are tied to the loss of contracts to broadcast hockey games, a decline in viewership among 25 to 54 year olds, and the loss of ad revenue.

Does the hon. member agree that the challenges that CBC is currently dealing with are related to what is happening in the broadcasting market?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, it is true that I am not part of the generation that saw the Indian head test pattern on television. I am sorry about that, but I have heard a lot about it.

What I can say is that CBC is adapting. There is a great deal of competition. A lot is happening on the Internet. Having an Internet presence is imperative and I think the corporation is adapting well in that regard. I have become a big fan of tou.tv. In fact, it is a big part of my social life. It allows me to watch what I want any time, day or night.

Fortunately, CBC is using these alternatives to deal with this massive competition. By stopping these cuts, we could give the broadcaster some breathing room and help it keep adapting to the market.

[English]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the CBC is Canadian stories. It is our voice. It is our sovereignty.

My first encounter with the CBC was in 1975 in Saint-Lazare, Quebec. As an anglophone Quebecer, the CBC and CTV were our two channels, other than the American channels we got. During the day, there would be game shows and soap operas on CTV, but on CBC, there was a funny man who drew pictures, dressed up, and talked to puppets. For a four-year-old kid, Ernie Coombs was the cat's meow.

Ernie Coombs fostered in me a love of art and a love of drama. He taught me things. He taught me good Canadian values. From that first encounter with that black and white TV set, I learned what it was to be Canadian and what it was to be an anglophone in Quebec. I learned the value of the CBC at that point.

In 1981, my grandfather St-Maurice's hotel in Quebec City burned down and he lost all his money and had to move in with my parents. Our TV programming underwent a shift at prime time. We were a family that liked sitcoms and American TV. We liked to laugh together. However, my grandfather liked les Canadiens de Montréal and les Expos de Montréal, so all of a sudden, we began watching *CBC Hockey Night in Canada* quite religiously. The transition took a bit of time, but I learned to love the theme song of *Hockey Night in Canada* and I learned to love the times we spent together as a family watching the games.

I am reminded that I went to my family last night and watched game seven of the Habs and the Bruins. There is a long tradition of matchups between these two teams. The Prime Minister can pretend that he is with the Habs, but he and his government, to me, act more like Boston. Here we have a team that is bullying, brutish, and, as we saw last night, desperate. When it is losing, it does not play a valiant game. It roughs up people against the boards.

While we are here, our party is defending the public broadcaster, and the Conservatives are piling up on our leader in this very House, pulling a Chara.

Hockey Night in Canada is a symbol of our cultural sovereignty. With budget cuts that have been made, the CBC could no longer compete for the contract for the NHL, because for a long time, at least 20 years, it had had challenges in its funding.

Business of Supply

My colleague from Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor mentioned the 1990s and the \$400 million in cuts the Liberals made, but I would like to mention something more recent. In 2003, Clifford Lincoln, the member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis, prepared a report called “Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting”. This report recommended that the CBC get multiple-year stable funding. The Liberals had two years to do this. They had two full years to implement the recommendations in Mr. Lincoln’s report. It was a parliamentary committee that prepared that report. However, we know the record of Paul Martin, and we know that he and his government had no understanding of the importance of the public broadcaster. Paul Martin, in the 1990s, cut \$400 million at a time when the CBC faced the challenges of exploding channels and platforms. The Liberals could have prepared for the future, but instead, they cut the legs of the public broadcaster.

To return to my family and the 1990s, I remember sharing Radio One with my father. We would listen to the radio. We would listen to people like Rex Murphy, L. Ian MacDonald, and Bernie St-Laurent. We can agree or disagree with these political commentators, but there was public debate, ideas, and stories.

• (1200)

I mentioned at the beginning of my speech that I was an anglophone. My father, William Nicholls, was an anglophone as well. He was not a man who watched sports games. He listened to the CBC. He listened to the radio, and he listened to the public broadcaster for information, because my father was a dropout. His father was a town planner for the town of Pointe-Claire. His father passed away when he was 17, so he had to take care of his mother and his mentally challenged brother and never finished high school, yet this was the man who was my foil and my debating partner.

My father, who was a Tory, with a disdain for Pierre Trudeau, and who was from a family of Tories, loved the CBC, because it was public debate. It was political ideas. He could shout at the radio about something he did not agree with, but we were talking about these issues. He was a critical thinker, and when he did not agree with something, he debated it. He debated, he spoke about it, and we would talk as a family about ideas. We would argue ideas. He did not shut down debate. He was not afraid of debate. He was not afraid of being challenged. He would never have identified with the party across the way. He would have been like Flora MacDonald. He would be supporting our party these days, seeing that the NDP is the only reliable one left standing to protect our public broadcaster, the only one reliable and trustworthy enough to defend our cultural sovereignty and the right to tell Canadian stories.

We are not just paying lip service here. This is not just a market-oriented decision being made. This is changing the fabric of Canadian sovereignty by crippling what has built our identity for generations. We are not just saving money or making economies of scale here; we are actually destroying institutions that have built for generations our Canadian identity.

I know that some members of the government party believe that the CBC is biased. This has always been an argument. I mentioned that my father would sometimes argue with what people said on the radio or television. My grandfather did as well. He was from a

different political persuasion as well. However, we had discussions about politics and ideas.

I know the current government’s position with respect to the CBC and its feeling about it, because I listened to the member for New Brunswick Southwest at the official languages committee. He had questions for Mr. Hubert Lacroix. He asked Mr. Lacroix about political bias in reporting and what he was going to do about it. Mr. Lacroix was talking about making efficiencies in his organization and budget cuts, yet the member for New Brunswick Southwest questioned him on political bias. Right there it became clear why these budget cuts were being made to the CBC. It was not because the CBC was not effective in its role. It was not because it was not effective in telling Canadian stories. It was simply because the CBC often runs stories that are embarrassing to the government.

Let us not beat around the bush. The current government does not like the news reporting service of the public broadcaster. It is so focused on its partisan agenda that it cannot see the wider picture of what this public broadcaster does. It cannot see the wider picture of how it goes beyond these nine years of Conservative governance or the 13 years of Liberal governance before. It goes beyond that. It skips generations and brings generations together by telling our stories and sharing our stories and ideas.

The CBC is our Canadian stories, our voice, and our sovereignty. I ask all members of this House to vote for this motion in order to save this institution for generations to come.

• (1205)

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the contribution of the CBC in Canadian society. In some remote aboriginal and official language minority communities—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges on a point of order.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, the member for Parkdale—High Park was standing up to ask a question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The Chair called for questions and comments. There was nobody standing in the chamber. I looked around on both sides. The member in question was on the other side of the chamber and was walking back, but she was not in her place. Consequently, we moved on.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for York Centre.

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, our government recognizes the contribution that the CBC, as the national public broadcaster, plays in Canadian society. Some remote, aboriginal, and official language minority communities are served by the CBC for radio and television coverage. As members know, the CBC reaches Canadians across distances and backgrounds from across our great country and reflects that diversity to each other.

Business of Supply

Specifically, the CBC is mandated to inform, enlighten, and entertain Canadian audiences and offer distinctively Canadian programming that contributes to an exchange and flow of cultural expression. That programming is expected to reflect Canada and all its regions to national and regional audiences while serving the needs of all the regions.

The CBC must strive to produce that programming of equal quality in both English and French as well as reflect the different needs of each official language community and English and French linguistic minorities. Moreover, the CBC/Radio-Canada is mandated to reflect the multicultural and multinational nature of Canada while contributing to a shared consciousness and identity.

Our national public broadcaster indeed has a broad mandate to fulfill. The CBC must, each and every day, reach Canadians using 30 television, radio, and digital services in both official languages, in eight aboriginal languages and in five languages on its international service.

The Broadcasting Act guarantees the CBC a degree of independence and freedom as an arm's-length crown corporation. This guarantee is based on the significance and importance of journalistic freedom in our democracy.

This freedom and independence of the CBC is stated multiple times in the Broadcasting Act, "...The Corporation shall, in the pursuit of its objects and in the exercise of its powers, enjoy freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence". Our government continues to work with the CBC in a manner that respects these independence principles and allows it to fulfill its national cultural mandate. Members may ask why this freedom and independence is so important. In the context of the recent announcements made by the CBC President and CEO about program and staff reductions at the corporation, it is important to understand by whom, why, and how those decisions were made.

Our opposition colleagues have been alluding to reduced parliamentary funding as the source of the CBC's current financial difficulties. I would like to put that to rest once and for all. The business decisions announced by the CBC reflect the realities of its business decisions. This brings me to how these concepts of freedom and independence translate for the CBC, particularly given its current situation. Now this is important, and I implore the opposition to pay close attention to what I am going to say.

When Parliament created the CBC, in order to ensure that its freedom and independence would remain paramount to government managerial oversight, it was designed as a crown corporation. A key feature of a crown corporation is that while they are public policy instruments, they also operate at arm's length from government. As an arm's-length corporation, the CBC is responsible for its own operational decisions. It is governed by a board of directors whose decisions regarding the strategic governance and stewardship of the CBC's resources are made at arm's length from government.

The CBC receives substantial funding to meet its mandate under the Broadcasting Act. It is up to the CBC to provide programming in French and English that Canadians want. The choices in programs and services are made independently from government involvement.

The implementation of the board's choices and decisions are managed by the president and chief executive officer of the CBC who is responsible for directing and supervising staff, as well as CBC's day-to-day operations. The board is accountable to Parliament and to Canadians through the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages for the good governance and management of its resources.

● (1210)

Each year, Parliament provides financial support to the CBC totalling more than \$1 billion for the corporation to deliver on its mandate and its core services. It is an incredibly significant amount of federal funding. In fact, it is the most funding that we provide to any federal cultural or heritage crown corporation and, as the CBC has stated, it is enough money for the corporation to fulfill its mandate.

I would also like to remind the House that the CBC also has access to other funding sources. Our government contributes over \$130 million to the Canada media fund to join the contributions of the private broadcasting industry in order to support Canadian television programming and associated digital media content. Given its dedication to Canadian content, the CBC also benefits from allocations of about \$90 million from the Canada media fund for investments in Canadian content programming. Its allocations represent over one-third of the total funding this program provides to broadcasters.

The amount the CBC or any other broadcaster is allocated depends on the performance of the programs and their digital innovations. This is to ensure that Canadians receive value for the investments we make on their behalf.

Another reason for establishing the CBC as a crown corporation is that while being owned by the crown and pursuing cultural objectives, it has a certain flexibility, similar to that of a private business, to operate in a commercial environment. For instance, the CBC can generate revenue through its assets and services and retain and reinvest that revenue in its activities and programming. Revenues are key in the funding model Parliament designed for the CBC. Federal funding represents almost 65% of the CBC's total budget, while revenues account for the remaining 35%. Of that amount of revenues, about half comes from television advertising revenues, another 10% from subscription revenues to its specialty services, and the rest from other revenue sources.

Given its mandate to reach all Canadians, and with revenues making up a significant amount of available funds, it is imperative that the CBC deliver programming that Canadians want to watch. This is an important point, because the current financial difficulties that the CBC is facing are due to a number of business factors that have reduced revenues. According to its president, the CBC's declining viewership in key demographics and ad revenues are causing these challenges.

Since the economic downturn of 2008-09, the television advertising market has rebounded, but it never fully recovered to previous levels. This is amplified by the CBC television program schedule's difficulty in attracting the 25- to 54-year-old age group for advertisers, making it harder for the corporation to attain revenue targets.

Business of Supply

The industry has also seen a major shift, with advertisers spending much more on online ads than on radio. The combination of those revenue losses is the main contributor behind the \$130 million shortfall for the CBC, according to Monsieur Lacroix, the president and CEO. To address this shortfall, the CBC decided to implement a number of program and staff reductions so that its spending in 2014-15 and beyond will match its revenues.

Our government is committed to balanced budgets across federal institutions, and the CBC must do its part like everyone else. Budgets do not balance themselves.

The individual program, service, and staff reduction decisions have been taken and are being implemented by the CBC separately from our government. We cannot direct the CBC to retain a certain number of journalists for investigative programs nor can we tell the CBC to open new stations if the CBC does not believe it is the best use of its own resources, nor would my opposition colleagues want us to have this ability.

The CBC's mandate includes a number of key elements that its programming should reflect, such as regions, our English and French bilingualism, aboriginal peoples, and multiculturalism. However, the way in which the CBC delivers programs and services in response to its mandate is with a great degree of independence from government.

•(1215)

We have heard that the board approved budget reductions that are being carried out strategically to move away from business that it can no longer afford, to focus on regional services by letting go of some local programs, to consolidate its advertising strategy across media lines and platforms, and other measures. On May 1, 2014, at the Standing Committee on Official Languages, Mr. Lacroix reiterated that tough choices had to be made in order to balance its 2014-15 budget while maintaining priority investments in Canadian content, regions, and digital.

The reality is that the CBC/Radio-Canada is facing the same challenges as every other broadcaster: fragmentation of audiences, new content consumption methods, increased competition, and so on. All broadcasters are striving to adapt to this constantly changing new reality. Large groups are being formed, new strategies tested, and broadcasters are looking for new ways to keep audiences. CBC/Radio-Canada is no exception, and must produce programming that Canadians actually want to watch. Our government provides CBC with over \$1 billion each year to ensure that the CBC fulfills its obligations as Canada's national broadcaster and fulfills its mandate.

Further, when the CBC/Radio-Canada's licences were renewed last year, the CRTC granted the corporation greater flexibility and allowed it to broadcast advertising on Radio 2 and Espace Musique as way of increasing its revenues.

Our government expects that the CBC will offer Canadians programming that interests them, programming that they want to see and hear, the kind of viewing that we are seeing today as we watch the Leader of the Opposition trying his best to explain why he used taxpayers' money for partisan political purposes.

I would like to summarize my address by stating that our government respects the CBC's decision-making autonomy with regard to its journalistic, programming, and service choices to

operate within its budget. The CBC continues to receive over \$1 billion in taxpayer funds.

•(1220)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud to rise in the House today to talk about CBC/Radio-Canada. I am very proud of my colleague who moved this motion today so that we can discuss these cuts, which really hurt our regions.

Radio-Canada is vital to central Quebec and Drummond. It is truly important. There are young people who work for the corporation who do an excellent job of reporting the regional news. Unfortunately, these cuts hurt our region. The Conservatives say that CBC/Radio-Canada made these decisions and that it is an independent organization, but we must not forget that the broadcaster's main source of funding is the federal government.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives have cut this funding, which has had consequences. Why are there cuts in the Drummond area, in central Quebec and right across the country? It is because of this Conservative government's cuts.

I would like to add that these cuts are driven by ideology. Information results in better decision-making. Does my honourable colleague not find that the information broadcast by CBC/Radio-Canada helps people make informed decisions when it is time to take action?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, that is typical of the NDP members when they talk about government money. They think that somehow there is this machine in the basement of Parliament that actually just churns out money, that there is a big wheel that just turns money out, dollar after dollar. The money is the taxpayers' money. We have committed to Canadians to focus on what matters most to Canadians: jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. We are achieving balanced budgets by keeping taxes low. That is our commitment to Canadians.

All households in this country need to balance their budgets. They sit around the kitchen table every single night and talk about what sacrifices they are going to have to make. Businesses do the same thing. Small businesses do the same thing.

The CBC is going through that very exercise. It is making those choices. It is up to CBC to make those choices, not the Government of Canada.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member for York Centre.

Business of Supply

First, let me thank him for explaining to us about the arm's-length situation, which I sometimes have to explain to my constituents. I get the odd comment about the CBC from my constituents. Mostly, folks wonder whether the funding is adequate, and I tell them the funding is quite significant. I am wondering if the member for York Centre gets those same kinds of questions from his constituents about the CBC and, if so, what he tells them.

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, that is a very insightful question. Yes, I have been asked those questions in my own riding of York Centre, and I tell my constituents exactly what they understand, because most of them run their own businesses and have to balance their own budgets too, unlike the Liberal Party that believes budgets simply balance themselves. When people are in business and supporting families, resources are scarce and they have to allocate resources to what they think is the most important. They have to make choices and consider priorities. That is exactly what the CBC must do.

There is no endless amount of money that comes from the taxpayers of Canada. We believe that taxpayers' money belongs more in taxpayers' pockets than in the hands of government. Therefore, we have been pursuing a low-tax plan to achieve balanced budgets, and we will do so by 2015-16, which is exactly what the Canadian people have sent us here to do.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague if he understands the difference between an expense and an investment. For example, Radio-Canada costs Canadians 9¢ a day.

The program *Enquête* uncovered the construction scandal and this will save taxpayers millions or even billions of dollars for a rock-bottom price. I mentioned 9¢ a day. That means that my spouse and I, for example, contribute \$1.26 a week to Radio-Canada. We watch consumer protection programs like *L'épicerie*, which saves us much more than \$1.26 a week.

Does my colleague understand the difference between investing and spending?

• (1225)

[English]

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, I have run a small business myself. My wife and I have two small children, 10-year-old twins, and we understand the difference between an investment and a cost.

As a business person and someone who was sent here by the people of York Centre to watch their dollars closely, I know it is really important that we keep a close eye on how dollars are spent in this country. That was the mandate given to us by the people of Canada. It is interesting to note that the NDP talked about tax increases and now it is trying to change its phraseology, saying tax increases are an investment. I am presuming its \$21 billion carbon tax that it is proposing is a \$21 billion investment.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his great presentation and understanding. He is also on the finance committee.

Earlier one of my colleagues across the way was talking about one of the reasons that CBC lost the ability to continue to televise

Hockey Night in Canada, which all of us are familiar with: that there were what my colleagues deemed to be cuts to CBC. If I understand it right, and maybe you can help me, it gets \$1.1 billion or somewhere around there in subsidized funding from the Canadian taxpayers, yet a private company that does not get any subsidies will be televising *Hockey Night in Canada*.

I am wondering if you can help me try to understand how CBC would lose it when it is being subsidized with so much money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I am not sure if I can clarify that for the hon. member, but possibly the member for York Centre could.

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, I understand where the member is going with this, and I completely agree with him. This was an example of the marketplace acting as it should. The NDP members talk about having this kind of other world where markets do not work and where there is direct demand from the government, where the government dictates how people can spend their money and what they can spend it on. They engage in social engineering. This is the NDP way.

We have seen it in Ontario. We saw the disaster that it led to between 1990 and 1995. Even the Liberal government could not clean that up. In Ontario we are still facing devastation because of that five-year period. The member is right. The marketplace works as it should when left to its ability to do so. Here we saw two companies, two corporations competing for the same product, and one simply outbid the other.

Nothing will get a business in shape more than to subject it to competition. Monopoly does not lead to a more efficient economic model. It leads to a more inefficient model. Anyone who has studied elementary economics will absolutely know that.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does the member for York Centre, who is claiming to be some kind of expert on business, know the difference between public and private television and radio? Does he know the difference? Is he familiar with the federal government's responsibility to our country's democracy and does he know why the CBC exists?

[English]

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, unlike my hon. friend, I do not watch a heck of a lot of TV, because I am busy doing work on behalf of my constituents.

The Parliament of Canada funds the CBC to the tune of \$1 billion. That is more funding than any other crown corporation receives in this country. That says a whole lot. We have made a commitment to the CBC. It is a crown corporation. What the member has to understand is that directives do not come out of any particular office here on Parliament Hill. The member has to understand that the CBC needs to be run like a business, as the president and CEO has himself said, and he is having to make those strategic choices in terms of where the scarce resources of the CBC need to be allocated.

Business of Supply

● (1230)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

I listened to the member for York Centre's comments about the CBC, and I do not think he understands the difference between private broadcasters and broadcasters owned by the government, which are crown corporations. When he was asked whether there was enough money, he did not respond with a yes or no. Instead he replied that the government gives the corporation a lot of money—about \$1 billion.

The CBC has had its share of cuts in recent years. For example, in 1994, the Liberals cut \$400 million from the CBC/Radio-Canada budget. The Liberals took \$400 million from the CBC. When the Conservatives came to power, the cuts did not end. Last year's budget included \$115 million in cuts over the following three years, in addition to the indexation of salaries and spending. This means that the CBC lost millions of dollars.

The CBC is a public crown corporation whose objective is to provide services to all Canadians. If not for the corporation, francophone minorities would have to do without a lot of things, including those from home. I am also thinking about Newfoundland and Labrador; Edmonton, Alberta; and Prince George, British Columbia. The CBC plays a big part in our culture, among other things, since it is a public television and radio broadcaster.

All other countries in the world think it is important to have a public broadcaster, and not just private channels whose owners can choose to align themselves with a particular political party. Public broadcasters are there to give us the news.

Let us look at who will be most affected by the 657 jobs eliminated at CBC/Radio-Canada. For example, seven jobs were eliminated in Moncton. RDI in Moncton had two reporters. If you cut one of those positions you are losing 50% of their reporting team. We lost the *Espace musique* music service altogether. It will not be found on CBC radio, since this was a Radio-Canada service.

In reality, the Conservatives do not care about the country's minorities, including francophones in the rest of the country. This was made clear when they voted against mandatory bilingualism for Supreme Court judges.

The Conservative Party does not believe in public television. It should be run like a business. I listened to the hon. member for York Centre, and I understood that the CBC should be run like a business. Oh yes. CN was sold to the private sector and now we have to fight to get money to keep the railway lines between Miramichi and Bathurst. CN is being run like a business. If we ran it like a business, we would put money in the bank. This is a public service for all Canadians across the country.

Canada is among the countries that do not pay much per capita for a public broadcaster, as compared to Europe. In fact, Canada is third from the bottom. Compared to various European countries, which pay up to \$59 per person, Canada pays only \$29, which is very low. Some countries pay over a dollar per person for their public television.

A good democracy is required to have public television. That is what I want Canadians to understand. If they were asked whether they would like cuts made to the CBC, I am certain they would say no.

[English]

If we were to ask Canadians if they want the government to cut the funding to CBC, I say they would say no.

● (1235)

We have a responsibility in Ottawa to support our public radio and television. A good democracy needs to have that. Other countries that do not have it are losing out on their democracy.

In Montreal, for example, the minority anglophones in Montreal and Quebec are happy to have CBC. They are happy to have CBC in Rivière-au-Renard en Gaspésie. They are happy to have CBC to bring the news into their homes. That is the responsibility of CBC.

However, the cuts made have not been done because Radio Canada is not running as a business. It is an arm's-length public corporation of the government. The arm is just as long as it is bent and one can touch it at the other end because we feel the cuts the government has made to CBC-Radio Canada today. People have been cut all across the country in stations where they could give the public the service it needs.

I have a little story about the French channel. One time, when the games were in Vancouver, I was in Prince George at that time listening to RDI. I know the president of CBC, Hubert Lacroix, is sick and tired of hearing this story, but I was watching the French channel and all of a sudden I decided to turn it to the CBC English channel. They were already on the boat going to Nanaimo with the flame. We were still on the tarmac waiting for the plane to open the door. People were missing. There was just a camera person there servicing Radio Canada.

[Translation]

That is why it is important to have this discussion today. We must take a look at our expectations of public broadcasting. Even the president of the CBC said so.

Under section 41 of part VII of the Official Languages Act, the government is responsible for promoting both official languages, communities and culture. Radio-Canada plays that role for our culture and our artists. However, with the cuts made by the government, Moncton has lost various shows, such as *La Revue Acadienne*, *Luc et Luc* and the *Belle-Baie* TV series.

All Canadians were able to get a glimpse of the Caraquet region of the Acadian peninsula in the *Belle-Baie* TV series. This series was in demand and was very good, but it was eliminated. We lost the local programming improvement fund, the LPIF, which used to support the corporation and its radio stations with money from cable companies. Which government was in power when we lost the fund? The Conservative government.

Business of Supply

The Conservatives are the ones who made the cuts, and Canadians are suffering the consequences today. The people are the ones who are suffering.

We have to ask ourselves whether Canada wants a public broadcaster. Are we going to lose it just because the Conservatives do not like it?

We were in public, on TV, when the member for New Brunswick Southwest asked Hubert Lacroix, the president of the CBC, whether he felt the broadcaster was too liberal.

That was the real issue.

The question came from the Conservative member. His only question was whether the CBC was too liberal. Is that why we are going to lose our national public broadcaster?

He should instead ask Hubert Lacroix how the cuts are affecting the corporation, communities and specifically minority communities across the country. That is the job of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Its job is not to figure out whether the CBC is too liberal, new democratic or conservative. I, for one, would be tempted to say that the private television networks are all conservative. That is life.

The government is going after the CBC. Last year, it cut \$115 million. It did away with indexation and, today, we are paying for it. It is not just us here paying the price. We are all paying the price. Each and every Canadian is paying the price.

We hope that the government will change its mind and support CBC/Radio-Canada.

• (1240)

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my friend's comments. I used to work at CBC and I was the union rep there for 20 years. Every year of those 20 years, whether it was a Liberal or a Conservative government, some kind of cut happened to the CBC. Those cuts are now continuing and it is but a shadow of what it should be.

The CBC has lost its role in the world because it is no longer the provider of Radio-Canada International on shortwave out of New Brunswick. That was a wonderful facility. It will no longer have *Hockey Night in Canada*, which is part of what Canadians from coast to coast have enjoyed for many long years. These are as a result of governments and, in particular, the Conservative government, which really mix what is needed by Canadians with their need to get re-elected. Their need to get re-elected is not a function to praise or not praise the journalists. The journalists cover stories as they unfold. The journalists do not take partisan positions.

Could the member comment on the notion that journalists are just doing their job?

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, we are all entitled to our own opinion about television or radio. I think that is the wrong debate.

What we should be talking about is whether we want public television and radio in Canada. Do we want a broadcaster with a

national presence? Do we want CBC to have a presence in Montreal, Rivière-au-Renard and Sherbrooke, where there are anglophones?

Is that what our country wants? Do we want a public broadcaster that ensures that the news is televised across the country, not one that is just a business? The hon. member for York Centre said that the CBC should be run like a business. We are not here to run a business; we are here to run a country.

We need to give something to our communities. This is the taxpayers' money, and taxpayers want a service. Meanwhile, the Conservatives are taking a service away from Canadians.

[English]

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech was quite an interesting one.

One of the interesting things is that our government has funded CBC at over \$1.1 billion. One of his colleagues talked about what CBC's reporting of news stories. My understanding is that Peter Mansbridge of CBC talked about the robocalls and CBC spreading the stories. It turned out that was not true, and Peter Mansbridge said, as I understand it, that they were feeding the frenzy. Therefore, the frenzy was not really a story and had no fact at all.

Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the comment is about the same thing the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl said. The problem was because of the Liberal Party

Now the member is talking about Peter Mansbridge feeding things on television.

When he says that his government has paid \$1.2 billion to CBC/Radio-Canada, his government has not paid a cent to CBC/Radio-Canada. The taxpayers have paid the money to CBC/Radio-Canada.

What his government has done is cut CBC by \$115 million. It has cut the index to CBC on wages at the expense of CBC. That is what it has done. It is changing our public television and radio and taking it away from Canadians, and this is wrong.

In a good democracy, we need public television and radio that is paid by the taxpayers and reports to the taxpayers.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, CBC is an extremely important institution for all Canadians. As a public broadcaster, CBC has a unique role to play. I want to emphasize the word "unique" because it is a role that the private sector cannot play, and I have nothing against the private sector. The CBC's role is unique because it involves educating and informing Canadians, as well as promoting culture.

Unfortunately, we know that the Conservatives are not really willing to stand up and fight for information, education and culture. They do not really like to talk about those topics. That is likely why they have been making cuts to CBC for years now. This year alone, there have been nearly \$130 million in cuts.

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The cumulative effect that these cuts have had on both CBC and Radio-Canada has been absolutely devastating. A group of experienced French-language journalists at Radio-Canada said it better than I ever could. Before I read this quote, I would like to take a moment to commend everyone at Radio-Canada. Since being elected, I have gotten to know many of them and I am struck by how dedicated and professional they are.

This is what those journalists are saying:

As creators of French services, we are concerned about the erosion of the resources made available to us to provide a quality public service. With cuts after cuts, Radio-Canada is slowing dying. There is no denying it: in the past six years, close to 20% of the French news budget has been cut.

...

But we are reaching a breaking point. These cutbacks will of course affect our news programming. This is a direct attack on what makes us unique and sets us apart from the competition.

Coverage of international news, which was one of our strengths and a reflection of our openness to the world, is now in jeopardy.

Sports broadcasting is disappearing. The staff covering culture has been drastically cut.

...

A program like *Enquête*, without which the Charbonneau commission would not have happened, is one of the most striking examples of Radio-Canada's contribution to our country's democratic health. Without the resources we had, the revelations that saved tens of millions of dollars would have been impossible.

Clearly, *Enquête*, the program they mention here, is a good illustration of what is at stake. Obviously, there are costs associated with producing *Enquête*. However, the benefits far outweigh the costs, and we would not have those benefits if the journalists and researchers at *Enquête* were not given the resources they need to do their job.

The same is true for international news, as was mentioned earlier. We know that the private sector often does not have the resources to send correspondents abroad. However, the work that the public broadcaster's correspondents do abroad is essential to keep Canadians informed about what is going on in the world. This is increasingly important in the globalized world we live in, even though the Conservatives are trying to build walls around Canada and isolate us completely.

● (1245)

[*English*]

Other countries, and I think in particular of Great Britain where I lived for a few years, understand the importance of their public radio and television and give it the necessary means to do its job. Let me give a few examples: Great Britain, \$97 per person per year; Norway, \$180 per person per year; Germany, which is not this little weird country, generally knows how to manage things and does not throw money away, \$124 per person per year.

The international average is \$82 a year. The average for Canada is \$29 a year. Here again we are at the bottom of the class.

When I asked a colleague a question earlier, I said it was 9¢ a day, but it is in fact 8¢ a day. Every Canadian gives 8¢ a day to our public broadcasting service, Radio-Canada/CBC. It is about one coffee a month, or something like that.

These countries understand that public radio and television play a role in creating a more healthy, a more vibrant, a better informed,

and a better educated population. We all gain from this. That is why I do not consider paying for Radio-Canada/CBC a cost; I consider it an investment.

These countries understand that public radio and television are part of the public debate and are therefore an essential tool for democracy, but here again we are talking about culture, education, and information, which are not the Conservatives' strong suits. Unfortunately, democracy is not either, as we have seen the Conservative government trying to undermine our democracy again this week with the unfair elections act and repeatedly over the last few years.

It is not only under the Conservatives that the government has been eroding CBC/ Radio-Canada's capacity to fully play its role. It started well before. It started under the Liberals.

● (1250)

[*Translation*]

The gradual erosion of CBC and Radio-Canada's ability to fulfill their role, including the critical one of connecting with francophones across Canada and anglophone minorities in Quebec in particular, began under the Liberals. That role is integral to our national institutions.

We have to put an end to this erosion, this slow demise. We have to stop this death by a thousand cuts. We have to ensure that the CBC has the stable, adequate, multi-year funding it needs to function properly. It is not that complicated.

I would like to call on everyone and thank the thousands—not dozens or hundreds, but thousands—of people from Laurier—Sainte-Marie who have written to me about this. Together, let us save the CBC.

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I look at the CBC and its various parts, I see the radio system is a good system. If they want to fiddle with it a bit, fine, but it is a good system. Newsworld is a good system. Even the French TV serves a good purpose, but I cannot see any purpose for English TV. If we check all the English TV programs, we see that most of them come from the United States. It is no different from CTV, Global, and all the other channels. I think CBC English TV should be considered for elimination.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: What can I say, Mr. Speaker? What he just said is astounding.

Thankfully, according to my colleague, all is not lost, and I have to admit that what he said took me by surprise:

● (1255)

[*English*]

Even the French TV could be saved. Oh, my God—"even".

[*Translation*]

That is just amazing. As for CBC television? Well, I watch on occasion when I have time, and I think the Canadian news programs are exceptionally good.

I do not know if my colleague watches more of the entertainment programming—that would be hard—but that is not the point. What the government is doing is cutting funding and then saying that it does not like the product.

The federal government's role here is to provide adequate funding for the CBC. That is its job, not to say that it likes this particular show, but not that one because it is from the United States. No. Adequate funding. That is all.

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague emphasized that it is important to support our public broadcaster.

Many of us believe that Radio-Canada is more than a public broadcaster; it helps create our identity. Thanks to Radio-Canada, we have access to talent from all over and from close to home. We can find out what is going on and share information, our experiences and our knowledge among regions and linguistic communities within the greater Francophonie, thereby building a stronger, more triumphant identity.

Can she comment further on that?

Ms. Hélène Lavergère: Exactly, Mr. Speaker, and that is why it is such an extraordinary institution. It helps to build our identity.

Clearly, I come from Quebec. We recognize each other by generation; we say we are part of the *Bobino* generation or some other generation. It is part of who we are. It is also a window onto the country, from one end to another, from north to south, and onto other communities.

Going back to a previous question, I feel that is as true for anglophones with CBC as for francophones with Radio-Canada. It is also a window onto the international Francophonie, because of all the reports from journalists posted abroad and shows like *Une heure sur terre*, which I imagine must have disappeared because of the cuts.

All these things open us up to each other. The institution both creates identity and provides an extraordinary tool for openness.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to stand in the House and speak on this motion that has been brought forward by a colleague of mine from the NDP.

The relationship between the government and CBC/Radio-Canada is an arm's-length relationship, and that is for good reason. I would like to spend some time to clarify the nature of that particular relationship.

I will begin with a reminder of the origins of CBC. When the corporation was created back in 1936, Parliament provided for a great level of autonomy from the government to ensure the independence of the corporation's broadcasting and programming decisions and its freedom from any political interference.

Since then and over the years, the Broadcasting Act, the legislation governing the corporation, has been amended a number of times to adapt to the changing broadcasting landscape. These various amendments were made in full respect of the necessity for an

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arm's-length relationship between CBC and the government of the day. It is a relationship that is defined fundamentally by freedom of expression, a cornerstone of Canadian democracy.

The CBC's independence is explicitly underscored in three sections of the Broadcasting Act:

The Corporation shall, in the pursuit of its objects and in the exercise of its powers, enjoy freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence.

The corporation reports to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages. It is governed by a board of directors consisting of 12 directors, including the chairperson and the president, who is appointed by the Governor in Council.

The board provides overall stewardship of the corporation. It is responsible for the fulfillment of the mandate and directing the business, activities, and affairs of the corporation. It holds its senior management accountable for its. It is also responsible for providing strategic guidance to the CBC. The public broadcaster's current five-year strategic plan is an example of the how the board interprets its public mandate and provides guidance to the CBC in developing media strategies, programming and other initiatives.

It is important to take a few moments to speak about how the board's strategic guidance impacts the CBC.

CBC's mandate states that:

...the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as the national public broadcaster, should provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains;

...the programming provided by the Corporation should:

- i. be predominantly and distinctively Canadian,
- ii. reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions,
- iii. actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression,
- iv. be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities,
- v. strive to be of equivalent quality in English and French,
- vi. contribute to shared national consciousness and identity,
- vii. be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the purpose, and
- viii. reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada.

In order to provide Canadians with a wide range of Canadian cultural programs, the public broadcaster must provide content on multiple media platforms. Canadians expect to have access to media content at the time and place of their choosing, be it on a mobile device or on their television set to video on demand. They also want to contribute content, to participate, and to be able to express their own opinions back to the corporation.

The CBC must strive to meet those needs by focusing on creating and delivering original and innovative high-quality Canadian content, by reflecting and bringing together Canadians in its regional and national programming, and by engaging with Canadian audiences through special events such as town halls. Most importantly, the CBC must strive to be cost-effective, transparent, and accountable.

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• (1300)

The CBC must offer high-quality national programs that inform, enlighten, and entertain Canadians, just as its mandate requires it to do. The CBC carves out space, forums, or opportunities for Canadians to connect with one another and share stories, experiences, and opinions.

It must maintain and, where applicable, increase its presence in regions and must continue to do so in an innovation fashion, using all or some of the various services, depending on the specific circumstances. It must also seek to reach communities that do not have access to many channels or cultural services. It also offers news programming produced in the regions.

The CBC has recently expanded its reach to certain communities in our country, including Kelowna, Edmonton, Hamilton, and northern and southern suburbs of Montreal, as well as Newfoundland.

The CBC is also investing in the digital programming of its corporation. The CBC is already recognized as a leader in digital offering with its new websites and innovative applications, such as the CBC music web portal and others. The corporation now offers a broad suite of digital programming that can be accessed by Canadians when and how they want it. Digital programming can also mean an increased presence in the regions.

The corporation must continue to strive to be a presence in these regions in digital media and offering Canadian content at prime time, during the day. It must also continue to seek to diversify and to increase revenues.

The CBC should continue to form partnerships and pursue avenues to maximize its own resources. The corporation is responsible for establishing performance indicators to monitor how well, according to Canadians, its programming and services fill the main elements of its mandate.

Our government strongly supports the emphasis the corporation is placing on measuring its performance, as it is imperative that all corporations demonstrate the results they achieve using Canadian tax dollars.

In terms of meeting its mandate, according to a recent survey commissioned by the corporation, CBC's English and French language radio and television services scored an average of 8 out of 10 for being informative, enlightening, entertaining, and available on new platforms.

When asked how English and French services fare against the corporation's strategic priorities, it received an average, again, of about 8 out of 10 for being high-quality, distinctive, diverse, and reflective of Canada's regions.

Like all broadcasters, the corporation continues to measure audience share, revenues, subscribers, production costs, and adoption to new platforms. Noteworthy results include the performance of French television, its network radio services, and its process on digital platforms.

On the other hand, the CBC must find ways of attracting Canadians aged 25 to 54, which is a key demographic sought by

television advertisers. It is in decline in viewership, and the decline of advertising revenue is causing a number of challenges for the corporation.

To conclude this example of governance, it is critical to underscore that the corporation is responsible for the day-to-day operations, including its strategic objectives. It is up to CBC to ensure its strategic plans are fulfilled and that they meet the needs of Canadians.

The president, as chief executive officer at the head of the senior executive team, is responsible for the overall management of the corporation. He is accountable to the board of directors for the efficient operation of the corporation in accordance with the plans and priorities established by the board.

The board of directors has a proper mix of skill and experience to manage the CBC and ensure it fulfills its mandate. Considering the legislative framework and regulations surrounding the broadcasting sector, it is also important that the board fulfill its roles and responsibilities. The board has the knowledge, skills, and experience required to do a proper job, including in the areas of media, legal, accounting, community, and business sectors.

• (1305)

I would like to get back now to the nature of the arm's-length relationship with government that the corporation has, and the terms of accountability that Parliament has in ensuring the accountability for the Canadian public.

As we know, the Financial Administration Act governs the administration of public funds, and part X of the act provides a broad accountability framework through which most crown corporations normally engage with the government. However, CBC is exempt from certain sections of part X of the Financial Administration Act. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation shares this exemption with a very few select crown corporations, and this exemption is put into place to ensure that some cultural activities and decisions are completely free of any political involvement. While this exemption from the portion of the Financial Administration Act gives the corporation a high level of autonomy from government, it still has to comply with key reporting requirements that apply to all federal crown corporations as well as under its own legislation, the Broadcasting Act, or under other legislation such as the Access to Information Act, the Privacy Act, and labour laws, among others.

Every year, the corporation informs government what it intends to do by submitting to the responsible minister, for information only, a corporate plan and a five-year outlook. A summary of the plan and the annual operating and capital budgets are tabled each year before Parliament.

Like every other broadcaster in Canada, the CBC has to comply with regulations set out by the CRTC. In addition, the CRTC established specific licensing conditions for the CBC and Radio-Canada television and radio services to encourage the national public broadcaster to deliver on key elements of its mandate and contribute to a strong Canadian broadcasting system.

To give even more strength to the crown corporation's accountability to Canadians, our government, in 2007, expanded the scope of the Access to Information Act so that more federal organizations, including the CBC, are required to respond to information requests. It also brought the corporation under a proactive disclosure requirement, which means that the travel and hospitality expenses of its executives and the members of its board of directors must be published online on a quarterly basis. We expect that the CBC will fully comply, and that it does fully comply, with the requirements under both of these acts.

We went even further to encourage an exchange between Canadians and the board of any crown corporation. To encourage the CBC to engage directly with Canadians, we provided Canadians with an opportunity to speak directly to the boards, including the board of CBC. In 2009, our government added the requirement in the Financial Administration Act that crown corporations hold annual public meetings. The purpose of the annual public meeting is to give the public an opportunity to ask questions and express concerns that they might have over the programming directions, the fiscal management, or the overall stewardship of CBC. As principal stewards of the corporation, the board must hold meetings attended by the chair and the president and chief executive officer, as well as the chief financial officer. They are expected to speak about the plans and the spending of the corporation over the previous year, and about its future direction.

There are also mechanisms for Canadians to pursue complaints about CBC or Radio-Canada news or public affairs coverage. They may contact the corporation directly through any of its stations or here at the head office in Ottawa. Where the complainant feels that the concern has not been resolved by the corporation, the complainant has the recourse of an ombudsman. There are two independent ombudsmen, one for the CBC's English side and one for the Radio-Canada French service. The ombudsmen act as an appeal authority for the complainants who are dissatisfied with the responses from the corporation's program staff or management. The ombudsmen review complaints regarding journalistic and current affairs material. The ombudsmen determine whether the journalistic process or the radio, television, or Internet content involved in the complaint does in fact violate the corporation's journalistic policies, and may subsequently recommend corrective action such as an on-air apology or some other type of follow-up.

●(1310)

The ombudsmen are independent of the corporation's program staff and management. After investigating complaints, the ombudsmen report their findings directly to the president and CEO of the CBC and, through him, to the board of directors. Hence, Canadians can expect that when the corporation's journalistic and public affairs policies are not respected, they have a recourse and an unbiased resolution method.

Our Conservative government believes it is important for Canadians to have direct avenues to hold CBC to account. The CBC receives a significant amount of funding from taxpayers. The more than \$1.1 billion that the CBC receives in direct and indirect funding is sufficient to fulfill its public mandate to reach Canadians as prescribed under the Broadcasting Act.

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As the House knows, Canadian audiences now have a number of high-tech electronic devices and hundreds of television and radio services that allow them greater freedom to choose and access the content they want. The CBC must continue to invest in the programs and platforms in which Canadians want to invest their time watching. It has the independence to decide how best to invest the funds received from Parliament in programming to achieve its mandate.

The corporation has always operated and will continue to operate at arm's length from any government. The corporation's reporting obligations are necessary to ensure that CBC remains accountable to all Canadians and delivers high-quality programming that Canadians want to enjoy.

●(1315)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish everyone a happy Yukon Francophone Day today.

I listened to the hon. member and it is as if he is telling us that he supports CBC/Radio-Canada.

[*English*]

My question for him is whether he agrees with his party colleague from Carleton—Mississippi Mills, who asked if we should not get rid of CBC/Radio-Canada's English television. That is what he said in the House.

I would like to know what he feels about that. Is that what the government thinks, or does he disagree with his colleague from his party?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, CBC does have a mandate to provide television services and access for Canadians across the country to reflect communities and regions to other regions in this country. That is number one.

Number two is to have content that is in fact Canadian. There have been concerns expressed about CBC's retraction from communities like mine, which is a rural community that is underserved. There are great concerns about CBC's retraction from communities that are underserved into media markets that are, in some cases, already saturated. Obviously, CBC has to carry out its mandate. We expect it to do that. We expect it to include Canadian content in that.

The mandate is clear. CBC has the resources to do that. It has demonstrated that it has been innovative in doing that in some cases. We would encourage it to continue to do that.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question on a similar point, because I also heard the remark from the Conservative member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills that, because there were not enough Canadian shows, the English CBC television should be eliminated.

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Maybe he should not have been taken literally. I hate it when politicians feign indignation. Maybe he was just exaggerating a bit. However, his reason for saying that was that there were not enough Canadian TV shows.

I would like to ask my colleague who has just spoken across the way which one is his favourite show out of *Rick Mercer Report*, *The Nature of Things*, *Dragons' Den*, *the fifth estate*, *The National*, and a lot of others. Which one of these is his favourite Canadian show?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, I actually do not spend a lot of time watching television. I spend a lot of time working.

What I find concerning is that when we approached the CBC, having been the host city for the Arctic Winter Games, we felt that it was important that CBC reflect what is an important event in communities across northern Canada. We expressed concern that it had chosen not to cover the Arctic Winter Games to the extent Canadians in the north would expect. The CBC basically said that it was a decision for CBC North, but because Grande Prairie does not fit within that jurisdiction, it was a tug-of-war between CBC North and CBC in Alberta. It became quite evident that the CBC did not have a national plan as to how we could reflect a very important national event in my constituency to the rest of Canadians.

It is important that all Canadians see events that are important in one part of our country reflected in the rest of the country. I would encourage the CBC to continue to invest in underserved locations, such as rural communities across this country.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned a billion dollars. It sounds like a big number, but it comes down to pennies a day per Canadian. Do the math.

I believe that the really important part of the CBC, especially for rural locations like northwestern Ontario, the high Arctic, the Prairies, and many places, is CBC Radio. It is cost-effective. It is a small percentage of the overall CBC budget. I am hopeful that at some point, the CBC will split its finances and its organization into radio and television.

I wonder if the hon. member might agree with me that splitting it into radio and television would allow Radio-Canada to compete effectively for the scarce funds.

• (1320)

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, in theory, maybe the hon. member's suggestion has some merit, but I would actually go in the other direction. I would suggest that the better the CBC works together and finds partners throughout Canada, the better it will be able to serve Canadians from coast to coast.

I would suggest that when resources can be shared between Radio-Canada and CBC and between both French and English radio and television, that is when synergies will happen and when the most cost-effective service can be provided for all Canadians. I do not think it is helpful to separate and build silos even more so than what is already evident within the corporation today.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it strikes me that the member for Peace River is a little like a person who puts one foot on each side of a picket fence and then tries to walk. He is a member of a government that has cut back

severely on the CBC, and in his speech he said that the CBC should rely more on its own resources. Ultimately, this forces the CBC toward market solutions, which actually take away from what he was saying in the other part of his speech, which is that there is a mandate to serve the regions.

I come from Vancouver Island. It took us 20 years to get a CBC radio station on Vancouver Island. It is now the most listened to station there, and it feeds the national network.

I have sympathy with the member as a regional representative, but his government is doing exactly the opposite of the things he would like to accomplish in his own riding. I would like to know whether his position is comfortable or not.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member points out exactly what the CBC should be doing. It should go into underserved communities where there is not an oversaturated market already. We have seen cable stations start up in rural communities. We have seen CTV place television people in rural communities and serve them, because the CBC does not. Who are people in rural Canada going to watch? They are going to watch the people who reflect things that are happening within their own communities.

What we find in my area is that viewers have consistently drifted away from CBC and have gone to CTV and the independent cable station to get local news. Of course, the advertisers have followed. They have said that they are going to move to what people are watching.

My argument is the one the member inadvertently made, which is that the CBC should be investing in communities that are underserved, such as his own community, that are now major commercial successes. I believe that money will follow success, and advertisers will go to where the viewers are. If the CBC provides a quality product in communities that are underserved, the advertisers will go to those same places, and of course the CBC would be funded better if it could attract advertisers.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am having a bit of difficulty understanding the difference between the Liberal and Conservative approaches to the CBC. Both have made massive multimillion dollar cuts to the CBC at a time when it has to innovate. Now that I have listened to the member's remarks, it sounds remarkably like what MP Clifford Lincoln developed with the Liberals under the Liberal government. They did a two-year study, from 2001 to 2003, only to have it scuttled when Paul Martin became prime minister. The minister of heritage at the time, Liza Frulla, sort of threw out all the recommendations.

Why, after 11 years and a two-year Liberal study, is he making the same recommendations the Liberals made while simultaneously cutting multimillion dollar sums from the CBC?

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, currently, under our government, the CBC receives record-breaking amounts of funding, over \$1.1 billion. Even during times of fiscal restraint, the CBC has continued to receive the highest level of funding in Canadian history.

The NDP suggests that there should be unmitigated funds available for the CBC. Of course, if there was a money tree here in Ottawa, we would all love to give unlimited funds to all the places on which government spends. Unfortunately, during times of fiscal restraint, we have to look to the taxpayer to fund the services that are provided, and taxpayers right now want to be assured that there are not going to be increases in taxes for expenditures, especially going to corporations that are managed well.

I guess the questions I have for the NDP are these: how much would it like to raise taxes, and who does it expect to pay those taxes?

● (1325)

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from the time many in this House can remember, there has been CBC/Radio-Canada. It has meant the national news at 6 p.m. and 11 p.m., *Hockey Night in Canada*, the *Wayne and Shuster Comedy Hour*, *Mr. Dressup*, *Anne of Green Gables*, great dramatic series, and stars such as Eric Peterson, Gordon Pinsent, Mary Walsh, Tommy Hunter, and Cynthia Dale. We were and are able to be engaged by the news, to be enthralled by the drama, and to laugh at ourselves with the likes of Rick Mercer.

Today we have an important motion before this House, a motion that speaks to the survival of CBC/Radio-Canada. Our national broadcaster does indeed play a key role in informing, entertaining, and uniting Canadians. However, over the past 20 years, our precious CBC has been the victim of many rounds of cuts, whether it was the \$400 million cut in 1995 by the Liberal finance minister or the \$160 million in budget 2012, the CBC is now clearly wounded and staggering under the impact of these cuts. It has meant lost programming and lost jobs. In the last week, we have seen an additional loss of programming and jobs. Canadian productions such as *Arctic Air* are no more, and over 600 people have lost their jobs at the CBC. These are creative people who told our stories and added so much to our sense of community and culture.

There were always questions in regard to why there were such punitive cuts by this government and the previous one. I have an answer. It could be that the mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada to inform Canadians upset government.

It is true that on this side of the House, the official opposition has felt the sting of exposing Conservative and Liberal corruption, and so too has the CBC. Whether it was the in-and-out scandal, illegal election fundraising, robocalls, the Senate scandal involving both Liberal and Conservative senators, temporary foreign workers, maligning a Supreme Court justice, or creating an unfair elections act, the government has been determined to undermine the CBC and its reporting mechanisms with witch hunts and budget cuts.

Today I want to speak on behalf of our national broadcaster and the immeasurable value that comes with providing sustained and stable funding for the CBC to fulfill its mandate, legislated by this House when that was a value we all held in common. That was before ideology trumped democracy, transparency, and giving every Canadian a voice.

The mandate of the CBC, and I quote from the Broadcasting Act of 1991, is to:

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...provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains;

(m) the programming provided by the corporation should

(i) be predominantly and distinctively Canadian,

(ii) reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions,

(iii) actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression,

(iv) be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities,

(v) strive to be of equivalent quality in English and in French,

(iv) contribute to shared national consciousness and identity,

(vii) be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the purpose, and

(viii) reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada;

Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with the member for Chambly—Borduas.

The Conservatives like to claim that the CBC operates at arm's length from the government as a crown corporation but at the same time have no problem hauling departmental officials from the CBC into committee to appear on behalf of the CBC. This happened at ethics committee and status of women, just to name a couple.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages has stood in this House to claim that the cuts to programming and staff at the CBC are a result of decisions the CBC made on its own, not the government, and that it is basically up to the CBC to keep up with the market and provide programming Canadians want to watch, as if the death by a thousand cuts that began with the Liberals has nothing to do with the government underfunding. It is a little like claiming that someone who walked away from the food store died from starvation because they refused to eat. It is technically true, but it misses the bigger picture by a country mile.

● (1330)

Over the past weeks and months I sat in the heritage committee and listened to Canadian musical artists, creators, performers, producers, and distributors speak on the issues faced by the Canadian music industry today. They all speak to the same sentiment that Lawren Harris acknowledged a century ago, in 1921, that the arts represent a fundamental building block in the identity of a country. He said, "The greatness of a country depends on three things: Its Words, its Deeds and its Art".

We consistently hear arguments against public funding of the arts that go along the lines of, "Let the market decide", "These are austere times", "We need to focus on the fragile economy", and "We don't want tax increases". I have heard members of the Conservative Party at committee say things like, "I would love to be paid to play the violin" or "I'd love to be paid to play hockey". However, we know that only a small percentage of people are paid to play hockey.

Business of Supply

While I agree that it is the government's mandate to promote heritage, it is also the government's mandate to make sure that people make a living promoting that heritage. If it is not profitable, then why do music creators create?

What I have heard from the witnesses at committee is that these arguments leave out the very real and measurable benefits of creating a healthy, sustainable economy based on exploiting the gifts of every citizen, including those who create the art that defines us as Canadians and those who work to make it accessible worldwide. We consistently heard from expert witnesses in the study that the arts have value, not only for the pleasure they provide but for the real and substantial contribution they make to economic development in Canadian communities and right across the globe.

Refusing to recognize this fact is narrow-minded. Conservatives who hold to the idea that we cannot afford to invest in the arts or Liberals who cut funding in order to pad corporate tax breaks are being penny-wise and dollar foolish.

Mark Monahan of Bluesfest, in his April 29, testimony to the heritage committee, stated that the one thing missing from the federal funding picture right now is the focus on economic development with existing funding for the arts. Those funds are not really focusing on the deliverables like economic development and tourism.

On May 6, Tracy Jenkins of Lula Lounge stated:

...we need to simultaneously foster a culture of professional music journalism. With changes to the publishing industry and cutbacks to the CBC, many of the writers and broadcasters who used to celebrate and critique Canadian musical arts are no longer active...

Finally, going back to the importance of supporting a diversity of musical cultures, we would like to point out that CBC Radio has been crucial in helping us to develop audiences for our programming and the artists we present. We have really felt the impact of the loss of the initiative to do live recording for a future broadcast as this was an effective vehicle for reaching new listeners across the country and affirming the importance of artistic contributions being made by culturally diverse Canadian artists.

It seems to me that if the Conservatives understood that they would not be slashing funding to the CBC; rather, they would be making our national broadcaster part of their economic action plan. We hear about that action plan all the time. What about culture? What about art? What about the CBC?

The problem as I see it is not that Canadians do not appreciate the contribution of the arts to a healthy society or of the CBC as Canada's national broadcaster in uniting us in identity. The problem is that we have not done a very good job in making the connection between the thriving arts community and a thriving economy, between stable, secure funding for a national broadcaster as a fundamental building block to a Canadian society that we can all enjoy, prosper from, and share in. Why do the Conservatives not get that?

• (1335)

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, part of this motion speaks to providing secure and stable funding to the CBC. I am wondering if the member opposite could define what exactly "secure and stable funding" is. If I want to support a motion that would spend taxpayer dollars, I would like to understand exactly what the amount is of those taxpayer dollars.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, secure and stable funding is the kind of funding that would ensure that the CBC can deliver on its mandate and that the programming that reflects us as Canadians is safe and secure.

The Conservatives talk about jobs all the time. We lost nearly 700 good jobs in the cultural industries when CBC reduced its workforce because of budget cuts.

It is interesting that the Conservatives talk about the billion dollars they give to CBC and how great that is. Unfortunately, the government never talks about the fact that it also gives a billion dollars in kind to private broadcasters. By that I mean, private broadcasters are allowed to carry programming that is not allowed on the CBC. Therefore, those private broadcasters are able to garner an audience that is not available to the CBC.

If we are going to balance things out we have to ask, what does the CBC mean in terms of our economy? It is significant. It is just as significant as any claptrap about action and jobs and the kinds of budgets we have seen from the government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt the CBC plays a very important role in Canada's economy, but it is very important that we recognize that the CBC's primary role has been to enrich Canada's social fabric from coast to coast, whether through radio, or TV, and more and more we are seeing a stronger Internet presence. When we look forward into the future of CBC, there is no doubt that Canadians as a whole support the need for a CBC. This is something we have argued for many years.

As opposed to getting into some of the comments that the member made reference to in regard to accountability and transparency, leaders and so forth, and what took place in PROC committee earlier today, what I would rather emphasize is this question for the member. Does she see the value in raising the profile of the CBC when we had a member from the Conservative Party who stood in this place today and said that CBC English is no longer required? It seems to me there is a bit of a hidden agenda coming from the Conservative ranks. We need to focus some attention on that issue here this afternoon. Would she not agree?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, there are so many bits and pieces to that, but essentially, as I indicated in my remarks, CBC and the culture, the heritage, the reality it presents to all Canadians, unites us. It unites us in terms of our languages, our linguistic reality, and our experiences across the country.

Business of Supply

The member mentioned that value and I would like to talk a bit about some incredible value that CBC has helped London, Ontario with. Just after July 1 every year we have the most incredible festival in the country. It is called Sunfest. Artists come from across the world and locally in order to entertain audiences. The CBC records those performances and broadcasts them all across the country. It enhances London's reputation. It enhances our artists' reputations and it brings us together. All of this is important and, for the life of me, I do not understand why anyone would undermine or undervalue that.

• (1340)

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although we often say that we are pleased to speak on an issue, we are not pleased, in fact, because we do not like the fact that we have reached such a point, as so often happens. However, I am very pleased to speak to the motion moved by my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher about the \$45 million in cuts in the Conservative budget this year. I am not counting the \$130 million or so that has been cut since 2008-09, if I recall the dates correctly.

This is an important issue to me because, in just the past few months, I have received hundreds of letters and emails from people in my constituency of Chambly—Borduas, not to mention the several thousand pieces of correspondence I have received since I was elected in 2011, when the Conservatives won their majority. There is no getting around the fact that the biggest cuts have coincided with that Conservative majority. Because of that majority, they are finally able to fulfill the objective they have had for so long. They make no secret of it: Conservative members have spoken publicly about abolishing the public broadcaster. It is also no secret that, at a Conservative convention, resolutions have been passed calling for the public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada, to be privatized.

The people back home are worried about this for a number of reasons. Clearly, we cannot ignore the French fact. I believe it is one of the unique characteristics of Radio-Canada, especially in Quebec, where there is a large population of francophones, but also in francophone communities outside Quebec. There is a certain solidarity in the francophonie. Although we are fortunate in Quebec to have a francophone majority and to be able to defend the French fact, that is not so much the case outside Quebec. There has been a certain solidarity in that regard. We see it in the way groups representing francophone areas outside Quebec—communities where there is a linguistic minority—are denouncing the cuts because those cuts are jeopardizing a service that is vital to the validation of their identity. That is the role of the public broadcaster. With its truly unique mandate, it validates several elements of our identity.

That brings me to my next point. Some of us had the opportunity to watch the episode of *Tout le monde en parle* that aired a few weeks ago, which featured some well-known and very respected journalists. Among them was Alain Gravel of the program *Enquête*. They talked about the impact that these cuts will have on Radio-Canada's news service. There have already been some unfortunate and rather draconian changes to the *Enquête* team because of these cuts. When we consider the important role that this program has played in Quebec's legal and political landscape, with the various

revelations made by its excellent team, we see that this is not just about identity. It is also about getting the information out and making sure that we have a healthy democracy.

We heard the minister say that, although the government is making budget cuts, the public broadcaster is an independent crown corporation and it is not the government's fault if the corporation decided to cut back in that way. It is hard to swallow the fact that the government does not seem prepared to recognize, at least not publicly, that these decisions are being made as a result of the budget cuts. It is all well and good for the government to say that it was not involved in Radio-Canada's decision to cut one producer and two journalists from the program *Enquête*, but the fact remains that this happened because of these budget cuts.

I heard some Conservative members say that CBC/Radio-Canada will have to adapt and look for private sector advertising revenue.

• (1345)

However, if a private company decides to buy ad space, it is more likely to do so during the broadcast of an American film at 7 p.m. than during the broadcast of a half-hour show or an hour-long show like *Enquête*. That is why it is important to have a public broadcaster, because at the end of the day, the taxpayers are paying for this. They do not have to negotiate with private companies that are looking to pay the best price for the best ad space. I am not saying that there is no room for that at Radio-Canada, but it is important to realize that this cannot be the only solution or the public broadcaster will become a channel like all the others. I mean no disrespect to the other channels. However, we must recognize Radio-Canada's unique mandate.

The impact on news services has not just affected shows like *Enquête*. There is always something interesting to read on the Influence Communication website, which looks at media trends in Quebec in particular. When we look at how different issues are handled in Quebec media, we unfortunately see that international news seems to be lacking. That is one thing that both Radio-Canada and the CBC do rather well. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to do so because they are lacking resources as a result of the budget cuts. Obviously, when a public broadcaster that relies on taxpayers' money is suddenly left to cope with a smaller budget, the first thing to go is the services abroad that send information back here. That is rather important.

Once again, getting the information out is part of a healthy democracy, but it is also important to properly equip the broadcaster so that people are able to access that information.

Most of us have different plans with cable companies. Channels are becoming increasingly specialized. For example, there are sports channels and news channels. There is another debate right now over the unbundling of cable packages.

Business of Supply

At the end of the day, regardless of how much we pay and what package we take, we can be sure to still have the CBC/Radio-Canada news channels and regular channels that are not all-news channels. We were sure to have those two channels without having to pay an additional fee. Now, as a result of these cuts, in the future CBC/Radio-Canada could unfortunately be forced to follow that trend. I find that very worrisome.

The government often talks about reducing the deficit. It does not seem very smart to be reducing the deficit at the expense of CBC/Radio-Canada.

Here is a good example. Look at the people who are going to lose their jobs. This shows the Conservative government's mismanagement. One of the groups that was hardest hit by the employment insurance reform—I mention this because there is a relevant connection here—was the set technicians. They are affected by the changes to the employment insurance regulations because of the nature and duration of their work. Sometimes they do contract work. These same technicians will be the first to pay the price of the cuts to CBC. In addition to losing their jobs, they are also going to be adversely affected by another file that has been mismanaged by the Conservative government and that is the employment insurance reform.

It is interesting because when we make all these connections, we see that the Conservative government does not actually care about the real impact that these cuts will have on our identity and on CBC/Radio-Canada's unique mandate as a news and culture broadcaster in our communities.

However, that is not all. These cuts will also affect the people who have jobs and who will now lose them. That is shameful. That is why I am rising today to support my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, who does excellent work. We will continue to stand up and support our public broadcaster.

• (1350)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight what CBC has meant to Canadians from coast to coast to coast over the years and the positive impact it has had on our society as a whole.

We have seen a government, whether through petitions or statements over the last number of years, put into question the valuable role that CBC can play. One of the biggest statements we can get out of the government today is a commitment toward CBC as an important national treasure.

Could the member comment on that, given a Conservative member stood in his place today and said that CBC should not even be in English TV? Is there a Conservative hidden agenda to get rid of CBC?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I would go so far as to say that, if it is a hidden agenda, they did not hide it very well, because at least two members publicly stated that they basically wanted to do away with the public broadcaster. We know that resolutions were adopted at the Conservative Party convention to privatize CBC/Radio-Canada.

For the Conservatives, CBC/Radio-Canada is just a television station like any other, and I explained in my speech why that is problematic. They want to push CBC/Radio-Canada aside. They are saying that more funding will be needed for programming, or else there will be more situations like what happened with the hockey contracts. We are not blaming CBC/Radio-Canada for losing the right to broadcast hockey games, but the Conservative government's management of this file is not helping. The Conservatives do not seem to be taking into account the identity aspect of this issue.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since this debate started, a number of speakers have mentioned the breadth of the mandate entrusted to the CBC. In terms of adequate funding, I wonder whether my colleague from Chambly—Borduas would say that a private broadcaster would undertake such a broad mandate as CBC's with so little funding and with the cuts that have been announced?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. I mentioned that problem.

A private broadcaster would undertake the mandate it could undertake with the funding at its disposal and with a knowledge of where it has to go to get it.

When a private company wants to buy time for its commercials, it is unfortunately more likely to choose to air them during a major American film dubbed into French rather than during a Canadian production.

That is exactly why CBC/Radio-Canada exists: to broadcast and promote our own unique, homegrown content in an accessible way, two things that the private sector is unfortunately not always able to do in the same way. Let us be clear, there is room for both. We are not saying that it must be one or the other, but that seems to be the view of the Conservatives. The private sector has a role to play, but so does the public broadcaster. It must not be neglected, as the Conservative government is doing.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to talk about the CBC.

I commend the member for Winnipeg North. It has been a long time since I heard the “hidden agenda” reference, so I congratulate him for being able to throw one of those into this debate. I am sure he will try in subsequent questions to throw in a “George W. Bush” because no debate he is included in would be complete without a “hidden agenda” and a “George W. Bush” reference. I want to commend him for that.

When we look at the CBC, it is important to look at it in a broader context. It is always difficult to hear the Liberals defend anything, and I am sure my colleagues on the NDP side will agree with me. When the Liberals were in office, and the NDP referenced this yesterday in another debate we had, their attacks on the CBC were legendary. They absolutely decimated funding to the CBC.

Statements by Members

Now the Liberals get up in this place, on this debate, and talk about how important CBC is, and that “My gosh, if it wasn't for *Mr. Dressup*, they would not be here”. What did they think of *Mr. Dressup* and Finnegan when they cut \$400 million and more from the CBC? I guess it was not important then, this national treasure of the CBC.

The member for Winnipeg North called CBC a “national treasure”, but the Liberals decimated it with cuts. They did not just decimate the CBC, they also went after health care, social transfers, post-secondary education. What they did to the military was a decade of darkness for it. That is the Liberal record on just about everything.

The Liberals talk a good game, but when it comes to providing good government for Canadians, they push that out the door and focus on what is good for the Liberal Party and their pockets.

The Liberals talked about sponsorship, so let us talk about sponsorship and commercials. What did the Liberals do? We all know about the sponsorship scandal. Imagine what the extra \$40 million, which was stolen by the Liberal Party, would do in the context of today. It would be there for Canadians to use. We are still looking for that money.

I want to take the opportunity to commend not only the current Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages but also the current Minister of Industry, who was the former minister of Canadian Heritage. We knew on this side of the House, unlike the Liberals when they were in government, how important arts and culture are to the Canadian economy, not just how Canadians felt about their country or their communities and the provinces.

We understand the pride we get from our artists, the pride we have when a Canadian artist is successful in other countries. We have pride when we go abroad and see Canadian artwork hanging in important museums. It is not just that, but it is how important it is to our communities. We understand that.

That is why in 2008, when the economy took a turn for the worst, when the global economy was at its worst and when every other country in the world was making cuts to arts and culture, we took a different path because we understood then, as we understand today, how important it was to protect and enhance that community, which gives us so much pride.

As I said, we increased funding to arts and culture. We are one of the only G7 countries that has augmented or increased funding to arts and culture, and the results have been spectacular.

I remember at one point a couple of years ago when the Minister of Industry, who was the minister of Canadian Heritage at that time, referred to the fact that five Canadian artists were at the top of the *Billboard* charts.

I know some of the members of the NDP referred to the importance of jobs when it came to arts. Absolutely, it is important. Arts and culture is responsible for so many jobs in our country, more than 127,000 jobs across the country. It is not just, as the opposition sometimes likes to focus on, about the actors, it is not just about the directors, it is about the other people who help support these productions. These are the types of people we are providing

assistance to through our tax cuts, which opposition members constantly vote against. This is about the carpenters, the electricians, the seamstresses, the hairdressers, the makeup artists, and all the people who help support productions in their communities across the country.

I will be happy to continue with my remarks after question period.

• (1355)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time for government orders has expired. The hon. parliamentary secretary will have 15 minutes when this matter returns before the House after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

MAURICE LAMONTAGNE INSTITUTE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it has now been more than two months since Graham Fraser, the Commissioner of Official Languages, released his investigation report on the government's desire to close Fisheries and Oceans Canada's only French-language scientific library.

The report shows that the department's decision to close the MLI's library was made with no impact analysis. Such an analysis would have allowed the department to measure the effect of the decision on the recognition of French. The commissioner is clear: he formally asks the government to reverse its decision immediately. The international scientific community and media from around the world have weighed in and now describe this attempt as Canada's desire to destroy its scientific heritage.

The minister's inaction has now become negligence on her part. She is showing herself to be incapable of complying with the Official Languages Act. She said that she wanted to wait for the results of the investigation before acting, so it is now time for her to get on with it and confirm that the MLI library will remain open.

* * *

[*English*]

2014 ALBERTA SUMMER GAMES

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to inform the House that from July 24 to July 27, the city of Airdrie will host the 2014 Alberta Summer Games. The community will host more than 3,200 participants, coaches, and officials as Alberta's top athletes, ages 11 to 17, compete in 15 different sports.

As the single largest supporter of the Canadian sport system, our government is proud to support participation and excellence from the playground to the podium. Events like the Alberta Summer Games not only help build Canada's reputation for excellence and competition but also promote the many benefits of sport, encouraging children and youth of all ages and backgrounds to lead healthier and more active lives.

Statements by Members

The Alberta games have a storied history dating back to the inaugural event held in Calgary 40 years ago, but I can promise this: “You ain't seen nothin' yet”.

I want to thank the many sponsors, coaches, administrators, and volunteers hosting this community-wide celebration, including games chair Al Jones, who are working long hours to ensure this year's event is the best ever.

* * *

[Translation]

SÉBASTIEN SASSEVILLE

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, running across Canada is quite a feat. Doing it while managing a condition such as type 1 diabetes is even more remarkable.

Today I would like to pay tribute to a young man who left St. John's, Newfoundland, in February on a journey to raise spirits and funds for the fight against diabetes. He is calling all of us to action, no matter what our physical condition.

Sébastien Sasseville will be in the nation's capital on Friday, May 16. He is on a mission and, like a champion, he is leaving no room for failure. He has climbed Kilimanjaro, completed the Ironman six times and run across the Sahara.

For Sébastien Sasseville, those challenges were not necessarily the ultimate goal. He picks up life lessons along the way and shares them during the motivational speeches he gives across the country.

The prevalence of type 1 diabetes in Canada is on the rise. Three million Canadians are living with this disease. Sébastien Sasseville is an example of resilience, someone who will undoubtedly inspire all of those people and their families.

* * *

[English]

NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE WEEK

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know my constituents in Oshawa appreciate more health and wellness choices. This week, May 12 to May 18, is Naturopathic Medicine Week. Naturopathic doctors are addressing the needs of Canadians by providing them with the tools they need to take a proactive approach to their health care.

As primary health care practitioners, naturopathic doctors identify the underlying causes of disease and use a blend of conventional, traditional, and natural medicines to deliver an individualized approach to health care. Our Conservative government recognizes the importance of naturopathic doctors. In the recent federal budget, we eliminated the GST-HST on services provided by acupuncturists and naturopathic doctors, increasing access to front-line primary health care services to Canadians across our great country.

I ask everyone here today to recognize Naturopathic Medicine Week.

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC PLACE

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust is promoting a unique project to preserve the last remaining naval corvette to tell the story of Canada's lead role in the Battle of the Atlantic, the longest battle of World War II. This ambitious undertaking is called Battle of the Atlantic Place, a legacy project for the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

The multi-million-dollar project would provide a permanent home to HMCS *Sackville* and would be a focal point on Halifax's waterfront. Trust members deserve credit for their efforts to preserve this important part of Canada's story. I urge the government to get behind this important project.

* * *

FREE TRADE

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight our government's plan to create new jobs for the residents of southwestern Manitoba.

Since 2006, we have signed and/or concluded new free trade agreements with 38 countries. I cannot stress enough the importance of gaining access to new customers and new markets around the world. Overall, Manitoba has a lot to gain from these historic agreements, such as new markets for agriculture products, new customers for beef and pork products, new markets for freshwater fish, and the elimination of tariffs on Manitoba machinery and equipment.

I am pleased to share with the House that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade will be coming to Brandon—Souris next week to speak directly to local businesses and agriculture producers. I am also inviting all constituents to take the opportunity to speak to the parliamentary secretary and learn first-hand how free trade directly benefits the local economy.

* * *

● (1405)

BUD OSBORN

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bud Osborn was an extraordinary leader and activist in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. His death has caused grief and sadness of a magnitude rarely seen.

Bud was a critical part of the struggle for the rights and dignity of drug users. He worked tirelessly for the opening of InSite. When times were dark and people felt hopeless, he gave us hope. When people felt that they had no voice, his poetry raised many voices and gave people courage. When people yearned for belonging and community, he led by example and united people in a common cause for human dignity and respect.

He worked with elected representatives, academics, journalists, and more to stop the madness of the so-called war on drugs. He spoke the truth always and without equivocation. Bud's greatest impact was his life's work for and with those without voice. He showed people that they could speak out, be heard, and change the course of history.

In the 100 block of East Hastings Street tomorrow, the community will unite to grieve and to celebrate the life of Bud Osborn and what he gave us.

* * *

REJUVENATION OF MAPLEWOOD FARM

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently had the pleasure of seeing the results of nearly \$250,000 in federal funding come to fruition in my riding of North Vancouver. This exciting project was the rejuvenation of Maplewood Farm. Funding through our government's community infrastructure improvement and the District of North Vancouver has helped revitalize Maplewood with a new indoor meeting space, fully accessible washroom facilities, covered viewing shelters, and even an upgraded goat playground.

Maplewood Farm is a local landmark with a history that stretches back to the 1920s, when it started as a dairy. Over the years, it has evolved into a fun family attraction where kids can meet the animals, learn how to be a farmer for a day in the popular "behind the scenes" event, meet the local farmhands, and go for pony rides.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the countless volunteers who donate their time and energy to help keep the farm running smoothly. I am happy to say that with their help and the help of our government's significant investment, Maplewood Farm will continue to be enjoyed for many years to come.

* * *

STRENGTHENING CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has introduced Bill C-24, which would strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship by fast-tracking it for the Canadian Armed Forces and revoking it from convicted terrorists. However, the Liberals and the NDP continue to oppose revoking the citizenship of convicted terrorists.

The Liberals and NDP either fail to understand the bill or are intentionally misleading Canadians by saying that there is not enough due process for convicted terrorists before their citizenship is revoked. We all know that anyone charged with terrorism in Canada is innocent until proven guilty and that they have the right to appeal up to the Supreme Court of Canada.

According to a national poll, 80% of NDP voters, 87% of Liberal voters and 83% of those who immigrated to Canada support stripping citizenship from convicted terrorists.

I ask the opposition Liberals and NDP to stop playing dangerous games and support this measure in Bill C-24.

Statements by Members

CANADA POST

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, opposition to the cuts to Canada Post continues to grow in my riding of Hamilton Centre. My constituents are adding their voice to those of Canadians from coast to coast to coast who are outraged that the government is supporting the end of home delivery, cutting thousands of good-paying jobs, and increasing the cost of sending a letter by nearly 40%.

These changes to door-to-door delivery will make it more difficult for seniors, people with mobility issues, and those with disabilities to receive their mail. Furthermore, rising costs for fewer services will have a detrimental impact on small businesses in my community, all of this while the Prime Minister's appointed head of Canada Post receives a six-figure bonus for this cutting of services.

The Conservative government has broken its promise to protect consumers and has turned its back on local postal service. Hamiltonians deserve better from their government. New Democrats will continue to stand up against these cuts and fight for a strong Canadian postal service.

* * *

● (1410)

VISION HEALTH

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May is national Vision Health Month, and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind wants to make vision health awareness a priority for all Canadians. We know that 75% of vision loss is avoidable, yet in Canada someone loses their vision every 12 minutes.

Age-related macular degeneration is the leading cause of vision loss, with over a million Canadians having some form of AMD, including individuals within my riding of Don Valley West. The number of Canadians who experience vision loss is forecast to double over the next 20 years, as one in four Canadians over the age of 75 will develop macular degeneration.

As demographics change in Canada, the cost of vision loss is going to rise, making our health care system even more costly for Canadians. The CNIB and Vision 2020 Canada are working to create a vision health plan for Canada. I encourage all parliamentarians to join me in advocating for this important health issue.

* * *

[Translation]

AFRICAN BUSINESS NETWORK

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the NDP's deputy critic for employment and social development, I would like to point out the remarkable work being done by REPAF, the African Business Network.

Statements by Members

Co-founded by Komlan Messie and a number of other members, REPAF is a dynamic, multidisciplinary network that, under the direction of Régis Dahany, brings together African entrepreneurs and professionals in the greater Montreal area.

I am very proud to have attended REPAF's seventh awards gala last week. The theme was "vision and inspiration". This is an opportunity for me today to highlight the network's contribution to the integration and success of business people from the African community.

I hope that REPAF will continue its efforts and that they have much success.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL DAY OF HONOUR

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, Canadians in communities across our country attended ceremonies and parades to mark the National Day of Honour. My wife and I attended right here on Parliament Hill.

[*Translation*]

It was a fine opportunity for all Canadians, including our promising youth, to remember the 40,000 brave men and women who served in Afghanistan.

[*English*]

More than 250 youth participated in this important day, including students of Notre Dame High School, who had the opportunity to commemorate those who served in Afghanistan and to pay tribute to the fallen at the National Day of Honour ceremony here on Parliament Hill.

[*Translation*]

It is a pleasure to see that our local schools are encouraging our youth to honour the exemplary service of our brave veterans.

[*English*]

It is a pleasure that our local schools are encouraging our youth to honour the exemplary service of our courageous veterans.

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HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, national Holocaust Remembrance Day reminds us, as the survivors know only too well, of horrors too terrible to be believed but not too terrible to have happened, of the Holocaust as a war against the Jews in which not all victims were Jews, but all Jews everywhere were targeted victims.

It is symbolized by the marking this year of the 70th anniversary of the mass deportation of 430,000 Hungarian Jews to the death camps in Auschwitz in 10 weeks, representing the fastest and most brutally efficient extermination of the Shoah.

I commemorated the rescue of the remnant of Hungarian Jews by Raoul Wallenberg in the March of the Living in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Wallenberg, the disappeared hero of the Holocaust,

demonstrated that one person can confront evil, can resist, can prevail, and can thereby transform history.

Holocaust survivors with us today, including those rescued by Wallenberg, are the true heroes of humanity. With them we pledge to never again be silent or indifferent in the face of evil, never again to acquiesce in racism and anti-Semitism, and always to speak and to act on behalf of our common humanity.

Never again. Jamais plus.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents of Don Valley East were very troubled when the RCMP Canadian firearms program unilaterally banned several rifles. These rifles have been sold in Canada for many years, and there is no evidence of widespread criminal use.

Recently, Sun News Network learned that the Minister of Public Safety not only was not consulted on this unacceptable decision to turn thousands of Canadians into criminals overnight, but was only given a few short hours' notice that it was even happening.

A fundamental principle of the rule of law is civilian oversight of police. As a free and democratic society, we cannot tolerate police ignoring those who were elected by law-abiding citizens.

That is why I am pleased to learn that the Minister of Public Safety will be bringing forward measures to ensure that this never happens again. Our Conservative government believes that owning a gun is a right that comes with responsibilities. We will always stand up for law-abiding hunters, farmers, and sport shooters.

* * *

● (1415)

[*Translation*]

MONTREAL CANADIENS

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals and the Conservatives—the two establishment parties that re-struck their age-old alliance, the one where Ignatieff gave his full support to Conservative budgets—invented stories and leaked confidential information, Montreal and the entire staff of the official opposition leader's Montreal office were glued to their televisions.

Whether in their living rooms, at bars or in the Bell Centre, they gathered to support their team, the only Canadian team left in the series.

Like the NDP in 2011, the Canadiens were considered the underdogs. Despite everything, they won the hearts of Quebecers. Like the NDP in 2011, they overcame adversity and the cheap shots, and were more agile, quicker and hungrier than their opponents. Above all, they worked as a team.

If there were only Liberals or Conservatives, there would be only one hockey team in Canada: the Ottawa Senators. We believe that Canadians deserve better: they also deserve the Canucks, Flames, Oilers, Jets, even the Leafs and, who knows, the return of the Quebec Nordiques.

Oral Questions

But today, we say: Go, Habs, go!

Some hon. members: Go, Habs, go!

* * *

[English]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the chance today to question the leader of the NDP at length was nothing short of a real pleasure. His elaborate, repetitive, and evasive defence of the NDP's illegal satellite offices and subsequent looting of millions of dollars from taxpayers got no traction, even when rationalized in Latin.

The most telling testimony the NDP leader gave may have been his defence of partisan work by constituency workers, to which he said we all just do it, just as the senators fiddle their expenses.

Canadians know the NDP cannot be trusted to manage the public purse. When the leader of the NDP is willing to compare his party with the few bad apples in the Senate, the Duffy defence, it highlights why the NDP has lost 16 consecutive elections.

I urge the leader of the NDP to do the right thing: stop his members from using taxpayer money for election purposes and for staffing partisan political offices.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 100 years ago, 340 Sikhs, 24 Muslims, and 12 Hindus from India set out across the Pacific looking to build a better life in Canada. After seven weeks of arduous journey, they arrived in Vancouver. After two months of near starvation in harbour, they were forced to return at gunpoint.

When they arrived back in India, many were arrested, imprisoned, or killed. The *Komagata Maru* stands as a severe stain on Canada's history. Why, 100 years later, does the Government of Canada still refuse to apologize for the *Komagata Maru*?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the tragic events of the *Komagata Maru* were a regrettable chapter in Canada's history. That is why the Prime Minister was the first prime minister to officially apologize for what happened to the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* on behalf of all Canadians.

Our Conservative government worked with the Khalsa Diwan Society to build the *Komagata Maru* monument in Vancouver, and we have funded other projects to educate Canadians about what happened to the *Komagata Maru*; and thanks to the member for Brampton—Springdale, there was a stamp released to commemorate the *Komagata Maru* just last week.

● (1420)

JUSTICE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is why an apology in a park is not enough. If it is sincere, apologize as the Government of Canada.

Was the Minister of Justice aware that the Prime Minister's Office asked Marc Nadon to resign and rejoin the Quebec bar before being appointed to the Supreme Court?

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the process that was followed was an open and democratic process, which was followed by all three parties. The Prime Minister obtained independent legal advice, prior to the appointment, from Justice Binnie. This opinion was supported by Justice Charron and also by the eminent constitutionalist Peter Hogg.

We followed a proper process, and we will stand by the court's ruling on this matter.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they say they will respect the court's decision, thus the answer to the next question should be simple. We have tried to get an answer on a number of occasions.

Can the Minister of Justice guarantee that the Conservatives will not use the same tactics to try to appoint another Federal Court judge to the Supreme Court?

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we followed a well established procedure and we will respect the Supreme Court's decision. Procedures are in place and we respect the letter and the spirit of the Supreme Court's decision.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, they are refusing to say that they are not going to use some trick to do that.

[English]

When families cannot get access to a primary care doctor or proper medication, they often end up in the emergency room because they have nowhere else to go. When people do not have health coverage, they have to go to the emergency room. There is no other choice.

In the two years since Conservatives cut health care coverage for refugees, hospital emergency admission rates for refugee children in Canada have doubled, in particular at Sick Kids in Toronto. These are children in need of care, not getting the help they need, so they wind up in emergency. How can Conservatives defend this heartless decision?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear about who will receive and who will not receive the interim federal health care program following our reform of the asylum system. Refugees will continue to receive this absolutely essential program. Those who will not receive it are failed refugee claimants, fraudulent claimants, bogus claimants, and indeed, the 10 million visitors who come to Canada every year. They do not qualify for provincial or territorial health care. If the Wynne government in Ontario or the Leader of the Opposition want to reverse those decisions, they will have to be accountable to taxpayers.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Conservatives do not think it is their problem to look after their neighbours' sick children. We believe that we have an obligation as human beings and that all sick children have a right to care, regardless of their country of origin.

Is it really the position of the Conservatives to refuse to help their neighbours' children?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is it really the position of the Leader of the Opposition that anyone who comes to Canada—and 10 million people come a year—should receive provincial health care? Is that his position? That is new. That is on top of the \$20 million in new carbon taxes. That is on top of tens of thousands of dollars in new taxes.

That is unaffordable. That is not the responsibility of the federal government. That is the responsibility of the provinces. We will continue to protect refugees.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian workers and employers still have no clarity on how the government is proposing to fix its broken temporary foreign worker program.

Will the minister explain, specifically, what elements of this program he believes are broken and need to be changed?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear that we will further tighten the program to prevent abuse of it and also to prevent distortions of the Canadian labour market. There may be some aspects of the program which are distorting the Canadian labour market.

What we will not do is listen to the leader of the Liberal Party who lobbied for us to overturn a negative decision by a Canadian public servant because he wanted to bring in a foreign worker to one of his favourite restaurants. We certainly will not listen to the Liberals who last week voted to expand the moratorium to all low-skilled streams, but two days ago he asked us to lift the moratorium for Quebec. There is no consistency and no coherence in the Liberal Party.

• (1425)

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Speaking of consistency and coherence, Mr. Speaker, it is that minister who, since 2008, had been in charge of this program, which is a complete mess.

Our plan starts with a reduction in temporary foreign worker intake and a boost to pathways to citizenship. Will we be seeing these proposals in the changes the government has promised are coming shortly this time?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the changes that this government has made, and especially those made by my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Social Development, when he was in this portfolio, we have fewer backlogs, we have faster immigration in our country and last year, we had 44,000 temporary workers who became immigrants to our country. That is five or six times the last number that the Liberals ever gave us.

We are on the right path. We are going to get the job market and the immigration system right for Canadians and for our economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, employers and Canadians who are looking for jobs are still unhappy with the temporary foreign worker program mismanaged by the government.

Can the minister clarify which aspects of his program are broken and assure us that, this time, the proper changes will be made?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the additional reforms will rectify the goal of the program and the situations that are problematic for Canada's labour market.

However, we will not take the advice of the member for Papineau, who wanted to bring a temporary foreign worker into his riding, to his favourite restaurant, and we will not take his advice about expanding the moratorium to all temporary workers, but lifting it for Quebec. There is no coherence in the Liberal Party.

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CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we saw today, the Conservatives will stop at nothing when it comes to making vicious attacks on law-abiding Canadians.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration slammed Negenra Selliah, an immigration consultant, claiming that he had been banned for committing fraud. The problem is that the minister fabricated the whole thing. He did not tell the truth. He reluctantly apologized but refuses to do anything about it. That is unacceptable.

Why does the minister think it is his job to lie and make unwarranted and unfounded attacks on citizens?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a statement issued by my department that never should have been issued. I apologized to Mr. Selliah. We will continue to work with immigration consultants across Canada to regulate their profession better than ever before.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me get this straight. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration publicly calls out a professional consultant as a fraudster, which is not true, and then when he is forced to retract he says that it is up to him to rebuild his own reputation. Political character assassination of their enemies is the hallmark of the Prime Minister's government.

What is the minister going to do about taking responsibility and making it up to this man whom he has unfairly attacked?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was a statement put out by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration in error. As soon as it had been put out, in error, it was retracted. I have publicly apologized, unreservedly, to Mr. Selliah, and still the NDP does not accept a public apology.

Will the New Democrats apologize for having misused taxpayer money in Montreal and elsewhere? We are still waiting.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us move on, then, from their imaginary bogeyman—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1430)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay has the floor, and I will ask members to come to order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, like I said, let us talk about real criminal acts to see how proud those members are.

The Prime Minister hired a convicted fraud artist, swept him through all the security checks and made him his chief adviser. Mr. Carson then used his cushy insider status with his friends in the Liberal Party and the Conservatives to engage in lobbying. This is not about a private individual; this is about a Conservative insider.

When was the Prime Minister informed that his former chief adviser was involved in a potentially illegal lobbying scheme? Why can the Conservatives not just answer that simple question?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while I have the floor, I want to congratulate the member for Kitchener Centre, who today tried to extract some accountability from the Leader of the Opposition with respect to some \$3 million worth of taxpayer money that was probably potentially illegally used to promote the NDP against the rules of the House of Commons.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order, please. There is a bit of premature applause there. I do not think the parliamentary secretary has finished his answer, but if members on this side of the House want to wait until he is done, they can feel free to applaud at that point.

The hon. parliamentary secretary still has some time left.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, maybe they thought it was like an election. They could just write their name on the ballot somewhere and run for office, but they never had to be there, just like the New Democrats who actually worked in those offices. They apparently worked in Ottawa, but their office was actually there, but it was closed by a fictitious door that the Leader of the Opposition called on. Just pay back the \$3 million—

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unlike others, when it is our turn we answer questions. Out of sight, out of mind does not cut it.

Bruce Carson was personally chosen by the Prime Minister to be part of his inner circle, and we are just now learning the extent of his deceit.

If a company learns that one of its senior employees is a crook, it will investigate and ensure that that does not happen again instead of sweeping the whole thing under the rug.

Have the Conservatives changed the process for vetting the Prime Minister's advisers, or are they waiting once again for the police to show up?

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, out of sight and out of mind is what the NDP members described of their last candidates in the Quebec election. Out of sight and out of mind, just like in their offices. Some \$3 million of taxpayer money was used to try to subsidize NDP efforts in a province like Saskatchewan where, the last time I checked, has no members and have not had one for 10 years. I guess the Leader of the Opposition was trying to get away with it for 17 years like in another matter, but he got caught.

Thanks to the member for Kitchener Centre, we are drilling down to this and getting the information. Just pay taxpayers back and do the right thing.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us now turn to the Conservatives' disastrous management of programs. The Conservatives' cuts to health care for refugees have had the effects we anticipated.

The hospitalization rate of children from refugee families has doubled because parents have been reduced to waiting until the last minute to ask for the help they need when their children are very sick. These are the most vulnerable members of our society and the Conservatives are leaving them to fend for themselves.

Oral Questions

Will the Conservatives finally show some humanity, cancel these shameful cuts and restore health care services for refugees?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear on this matter. The interim federal health program is intended for genuine refugees. We are not going to give funding provided by Canadian taxpayers to fraudulent or failed refugee claimants, nor to all the visitors to Canada. They number 10 million per year. We cannot afford it and it is laughable for the NDP to suggest it.

● (1435)

[English]

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is children who are paying the price for the minister's ideological attack on refugees.

Hospital admissions of refugee children have doubled since the Conservatives' disastrous decision to cut health care for refugees. Desperate parents are waiting until their children are seriously ill before they seek help. The minister's approach is inhumane and it is bad health policy.

Will the minister acknowledge the harm he has caused, apologize and restore health care services for refugees?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, will the member apologize for her lack of understanding of the refugee system, of the asylum system? She has insisted refugees are not receiving health care from the federal government. Every one is receiving it.

She would have us pay for failed refugee claimants, fraudulent refugee claimants, bogus refugees claimants and, it sounds like, for visitors to Canada. This is a decision the Wynne government has made. This is a decision that some doctors are calling for unilaterally. They will have to account to voters and to taxpayers for those decisions.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. There is an awful lot of heckling going on today. I am going to ask members to refrain from doing that. It is becoming very distracting to the Chair. Members will please come to order.

The hon. member for Vancouver East has the floor.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no lack of understanding on this side of the House. There are only the children who are being hurt by the minister's crazy policies when it comes to refugees.

The Wellesley Institute warned the government that costs to the health care system would rise as refugees would wait until they were seriously ill before seeking help. Now we see that it was right. Twice as many refugee children have been admitted to hospitals as were admitted before the Conservative cuts. That is the reality.

Why does the government think it is okay to make vulnerable children pay the cost of its shameful and discriminatory attacks on refugees?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should be ashamed of her

comments. Refugees and the children of refugees are receiving the interim federal health care program. We are proud of that record.

The opposition is calling for failed claimants, fraudulent claimants, bogus claimants to receive health care. That is the direction the Wynne government has gone into. That is the direction some doctors have gone, unilaterally, into. We will not support that approach. Many, many voters across this province and the country and many, many taxpayers are asking the same question. Those responsible for those decisions will be held accountable.

* * *

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for several days, I have been asking the Minister of Justice about the reasons for the disappearances and murders of aboriginal women.

The minister keeps saying that this is no longer the time for talk, that it is the time for action. I agree completely. However, in order to act, we still need to identify the problem. The minister is incapable of answering a simple question: what is the main socio-economic reason leading to the murders and disappearances of these women? With women continuing to go missing and to be murdered, does the minister believe that his measures are effective?

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work to reduce violence against women, including aboriginal women.

In the 2014 economic action plan, we allocated an additional \$25 million to put a stop to violence in aboriginal communities. We will not find the solution by doing studies but by taking action. We have passed three bills that deal with protection and we will continue to work along those lines.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Justice, when asked if nothing more could be done for 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women in our country, responded, "what we do not need is haughty, condescending questions from the opposition".

What families definitely do not need is condescending attitudes from a minister of the crown, so we dare to ask again. Will the minister and his government respond to the demands of families and Canadians across this country for a national public inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women?

● (1440)

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over time over 40 studies have been conducted yet the violence continues.

Kathy Meyer, whose daughter Angela went missing four years ago, was quoted as saying, "I think inquiries cost a lot of money and I don't know if anything comes out of them."

We will put the money toward real solutions in the communities with the aboriginals to try to curb the violence against the women.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how does the Minister of Canadian Heritage explain the fact that the Canadian Museum of History has decided, without consulting Canadians at all, that 87% or 26 of the 30 events planned to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Confederation will focus on military events?

Do we need a second Canadian War Museum? Canada's military history needs to be recognized, but is it doing our rich history justice to dedicate over eight of 10 events to our military history?

Why are no events being dedicated to the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage or the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, for example?

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, the museums make their own operational decisions.

Let us talk about the 150th anniversary of our country, which will celebrate and commemorate Canada's achievements from coast to coast. It will be a success across the country as a result of the consultations we have held with Canadians. In fact, consultations are still ongoing. We have held at least 20 round tables.

I urge my colleague and his party to hold consultations. They have not held any in their ridings. I therefore urge them to do so and to share with us their constituents' ideas.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after a combined 50 years of service in the navy, Leading Seaman Jeffrey Rissesco and Naval Lieutenant Allen Barkhouse are each being forced to repay \$50,000 in housing allowance through no fault of their own.

Last year, the Military Grievances External Review Committee heard Rissesco's case. What did it say? It ordered the military to refund them all the money the government had clawed back, yet his salary continues to be garnisheed.

Will the Conservatives cut through the red tape and accord these military families the respect they deserve?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts of this case are extremely troubling. Supporting military families is an important obligation for our government. That is why we have increased funding for the military family resource centres by 25% since 2007.

In relation to this particular case, the Chief of the Defence Staff is currently reviewing this matter and we await his decision.

Oral Questions

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the OSCE currently does not intend to send parliamentary observers to Donetsk and Luhansk for the May 25 presidential election in Ukraine. We appreciate the security concerns that motivated this decision, but it is in these two regions where Ukraine sovereignty is at greatest risk and where it is most important to make sure a fair, internationally monitored vote takes place.

Can the minister tell us what the government is doing to ensure there is a senior international presence in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts during this crucial vote?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously we are tremendously concerned with what has gone on in that region, that part of Ukraine. We are concerned with whether there will be a fair vote and, if there is not one, with the claims that Russia inevitably will make as to the legitimacy of the presidential election and the legitimacy of the new president.

We are obviously prepared to work with our allies and we are prepared to work within the OSCE to do everything we can to support a productive election and to support observations in that part of the country.

Having said that, I am particularly concerned about the safety of a number of members who will be travelling there. I know I have talked to the member for Parkdale—High Park and others about this, but we will continue to work with our allies and see what can be done.

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[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again the Conservatives are being strongly criticized by independent experts. This time it is because of the misguided measures in their omnibus budget bill.

The Canadian Bar Association indicated that merging 11 administrative tribunals would create problems in terms of independence and conflict of interest. It would also expose Canada to legal action and sanctions because of our World Trade Organization agreements.

Does the minister agree that these measures should be rethought and removed from the bill?

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the merged tribunals will not report to the Minister of Justice. The government is simply making a process more efficient and improving how it works. Our government will continue its work in this area because we spend taxpayers' money responsibly.

Oral Questions

•(1445)

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder why the Minister of Finance did not answer that question. He may not have read the entire omnibus bill, but thankfully experts have, and experts, like the Canadian Bar Association, have told the government that the massive and sweeping changes to trademark policy may not be legal.

The government does not often listen to legal advice. It really does not actually listen to any advice, but would it listen to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, which has told the government that aspects of the omnibus bill might not even be constitutional?

Will the minister take the bill back and fix the flaws that are deeply inherent in its DNA?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the concerns with regard to the five treaties that are embedded in the government's legislation on the budget are critical for Canada's future going forward.

These are treaties that were signed by Canada between 2008 and 2010. They protect Canada's intellectual property on the international stage, so that, for example, in the digital round, those who are investing in their IP will be protected, not just within Canada, but on the international scene.

These treaties were supported by all parties in the past. Now that we have finally put the budget forward and we are implementing these treaties, the New Democrats pretend to have some concerns about it. It would be nice if they knew what they are talking about before they decide to criticize.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, did the minister know that the Canadian Bar Association and the Chamber of Commerce are completely ignorant of the facts? Thankfully we have the minister defending Canadians.

What about veterans? Yesterday, we heard from veteran Sean Bruyey that the small change to the clawback for veterans who have been compensated for their injuries is an insult to Canadian veterans.

This afternoon we will hear from restaurant workers from Saskatchewan who will talk about the changes to the temporary worker program and how they were fired from their jobs and these changes are too little, too late.

Why is the government so obsessed with giving away Canadian jobs and clawing back from our veterans? Why does it not work to fix this deeply flawed bill?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Going back to the first point of the hon. member's question, Mr. Speaker, the legislation that we have put before Parliament will serve Canada's interest.

It is supported by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. It is supported by Canada's ICT industry. It is supported by the Canadian chambers of commerce, and those who recognize that supporting Canada's intellectual property regime on the international stage is essential for a country like Canada that invests so heavily in our universities and individual technology that those businesses will do great on the international stage.

With regard to the rest of the budget, we have put forward record investments to support our veterans and to ensure that our economy moves forward and that all Canadians will benefit from a prosperous

The Speaker: The hon. member for Victoria.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives do not understand their own budget bill, which does not surprise me, since so little has to do with the budget.

For example, the evidence is piling up that the implementation by the Conservatives of FATCA will harm up to one million Canadians.

Yesterday the Privacy Commissioner of Canada testified that other clauses to allow CRA bureaucrats to hand over our personal tax information to the police, without warrant, violate privacy law and the charter.

Will the minister not pull this bill before it ends up being dragged into the courts?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, FATCA has raised a number of concerns in Canada. The new agreement addresses those concerns by relying on the existing framework under the Canada-U.S. tax treaty.

The CRA will not assist the IRS in collecting U.S. taxes, no new taxes will be imposed, and only U.S. citizens will be affected.

We obtained a number of very important concessions, exempting certain accounts like RRSPs, RDSBs, and TFSAs. This is an agreement that works in the interests of Canada.

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*[Translation]***CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, while the NDP is fighting in the chamber to support CBC as it weathers a crisis, the government is saying that it has no hand in it. It is the same old story. However, it was this government that slashed \$115 million.

It is time that the government and the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages took responsibility.

CBC is vital to our regions and the Canadian Francophonie. I would like to give the minister the opportunity to give a responsible answer.

What will the minister do to address the concerns of francophones in Saint-Boniface, Moncton, Sudbury and Vancouver?

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, we recognize the importance of CBC. Clearly, some remote communities, aboriginal communities and certainly minority communities depend on CBC. That is why we invest significant amounts in the corporation.

The recent decisions were made by CBC. They have nothing to do with our government. Again, we expect CBC to have programming in both French and English.

* * *

• (1450)

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that for over a century, pipelines have been an integral part of Canada's energy infrastructure. With over 73,000 kilometres of federally regulated pipelines, it is crucial that they operate under the highest degree of safety. Our government has already taken strong action to improve our pipeline safety system, and we have a near-perfect safety record for pipeline incidents.

Can the parliamentary secretary update this House on what action our government is taking to build on this impressive safety record?

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Natural Resources was in British Columbia to announce new pipeline safety measures that will apply to existing and future pipelines.

We are proud that Canada is the first country to bring forward a \$1-billion absolute liability limit. Regardless of fault, the company will be responsible should a spill occur. These measures demonstrate our government's commitment to the principle of polluter pays and responsible resource development.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us get back to the CBC and its ongoing crisis.

The minister has to stop telling us that the crisis has nothing to do with her—

[English]

The Speaker: Order. I had an example of this a few days ago, where someone was reading a statement with something on the back of the page. I think the member has addressed it. I will ask him to leave it on his desk. The hon. member can continue his question.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, it was her predecessor and her government that cut the \$115 million. Her government is responsible for appointing the president and the board of directors of the crown corporation. All of the board members were appointed by the Conservatives, and the vast majority of them just happen to have donated a lot of money to the party.

Did the Conservatives appoint those people with the intention of putting the axe to the CBC?

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously that is not true, because if it were, the CBC would not get so much money every year.

Oral Questions

What the member is suggesting is ridiculous. The CBC's president explained the facts as follows: there has been a decline in the number of viewers, a decline in advertising revenues, and they lost hockey. That is why there were cuts. The CBC decided to make those cuts. It has nothing to do with the government. We are still investing significant amounts of money in the CBC.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just want to be sure that everyone clearly understood what the minister said at the very end of her answer, to wit, she sincerely believes the government's decision to cut the CBC's budget has nothing to do with job cuts at the corporation.

Does she really believe what she just said?

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not the only one who believes that. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I would like to quote the president of the Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada, who had this to say before the cuts: "Any future cuts will not be due to federal orders".

In addition, France Bélisle, CBC/Radio-Canada's director of communications and public relations, said, "The problem is the weak industry-wide advertising market".

It was not a government decision. He knows that perfectly well and should accept it.

* * *

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months, Conservatives spent \$9 million of taxpayers' money on self-promotional advertising. Talk about abusing taxpayer money for partisan purposes.

The Conservatives claimed they were getting tough on telecom companies, claimed there would be more competition and lower prices, but after being forced to sit through \$9 million worth of Conservative ads, are Canadians paying any less? Nope. There are fewer competitors, and Canadians are paying more.

When will the minister stop advertising to stand up for consumers and actually start doing it?

• (1455)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is entirely not true. Wireless prices across this country since 2008, in the AWS spectrum auction, have gone down 20%. Employment in the sector has gone up 25%.

Oral Questions

It was the New Democrats who raised no policy proposals on this file, but it is our government that has shown leadership in our tower-sharing policy, in our spectrum and roaming policies, and in the way in which we approached the 700-spectrum option policy that the NDP said would fail. Experts said it would draw in \$2.1 billion in revenue. Instead it brought in \$5.27 billion in revenue. That money is going to be reinvested back into Canadians as we move forward with more competition in the future.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since being hired three and a half years ago in a process that has been exposed as rigged and collecting an annual salary of almost \$140,000 a year plus expenses, Kevin MacAdam has still not stepped inside the ACOA P.E.I. office. Not once since he started this job has he stepped inside.

Would the minister responsible confirm to the House, though, that even though Mr. MacAdam has not darkened the door, he was awarded a performance bonus for his job at P.E.I. ACOA?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is the member knows that the independent investigation by the Public Service Commission did not find any evidence of any wrongdoing or influence on the part of ministers or political staff in this matter. The Public Service Commission is an independent body and as such makes its own determinations on what or what not to include in their reports.

This situation, by the way, is quite different from 2006, when the Public Service Commission reported that the Liberals gave ministerial aides free rides into the public service.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was quite a performance.

Another Conservative appointee who went on to accommodate further Conservative appointees and staff is ECBC president John Lynn. Mr. Lynn is currently under investigation on two fronts, by the ethics commissioner and the public integrity commissioner. He took a leave a year ago and continues to draw his \$180,000-a-year salary plus access to the company SUV, and of course, the company gas card to fill it up.

When the government shuts the door on ECBC, will the Canadian taxpayers be on the hook for another chunk of money by paying out yet another year's salary in severance to this employee?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that question, because without any doubt, our government's and the minister's expectation is that ECBC conduct its business with integrity, accountability, and respect for Canadian taxpayers.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, for the first time since 2004, the Confederacy of Nations is meeting. Fifty first nations delegates from all over over Canada will

discuss their concerns about the education act, Bill C-33. They want to sit down with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and discuss fair and equitable funding for first nations' education.

Will the minister agree to meet with the Confederacy of Nations?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think members of the House will agree that we should have members condemn, in the strongest terms, the threats of those rogue chiefs who are threatening the security of Canadians, their families, and taxpayers.

I will meet with these people when they unequivocally withdraw their threats to the security of Canadian families, taxpayers, and citizens.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about first nations chiefs from coast to coast to coast who have legitimate concerns about education. If they thought their concerns were being addressed, they would not be requesting this meeting with the minister.

Bill C-33 was supposed to provide first nations' control over education. Instead, it will only serve to extend the reach of the minister.

The Confederacy of Nations wants to talk about real first nations' control of education, where first nations have the necessary resources to provide a modern education for their children. Will the minister meet with these chiefs?

● (1500)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, contrary to the New Democratic Party, I do not believe that these chiefs represent the majority of the chiefs and councils throughout Canada, who I know and have met many times, who care about reconciliation and who care about their children and their education. I do not think this group is representative of the majority of first nations, and I trust that the good, hard-working chiefs will speak up.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on the Environment spent months conducting three important studies looking at how to conserve urban and other terrestrial ecosystems across Canada. Canadians are losing touch with nature as more and more people live and work in the cities and spend less time outside. Witnesses testified that the Government of Canada should be encouraging and supporting citizens to conserve our natural environment and create protected areas.

Oral Questions

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment please tell the House where we stand today on the launch of a national conservation plan?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Kitchener Centre for the excellent question and for all the great work he has done on this file.

I am proud to say that the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Environment launched the national conservation plan in Fredericton just two hours ago. The plan promotes our government's strong legacy of conservation work and includes new investments to secure ecologically sensitive lands, conserve marine and coastal areas, and help connect Canadians to nature in urban areas.

I am proud to be part of a government that keeps its promises and listens to Canadians.

* * *

CANADA POST

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of people in Winnipeg's north end came together at a public meeting. They were quite upset with the Prime Minister in regard to Canada Post. Whether it is rallies, postcards, petitions, or phone calls, people are upset with the fact that they are losing door-to-door delivery. They are upset with the huge postal rate increases. They are seeing an insensitive government dealing with Canada Post not serving Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

My question for the minister is this: Has he given any consideration to the impact on seniors or people with disabilities?

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is from a member whose party said very clearly that there is no crisis at Canada Post, when in fact it delivered a billion fewer letters in 2012 than it did in 2006. In fact, economists at the Conference Board of Canada have said that Canada Post would be losing up to \$1 billion per year if it took no action. It did, with its five-point action plan, as the member knows, and we have heard from Canada Post which says that they are taking into consideration the concerns of seniors and others as they implement their five-point plan, but we expect them to operate on a financially self-sustaining basis.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Uganda recently imposed harsh criminal sanctions on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. Now a cabinet minister has just threatened to shut down all HIV-AIDS education and support work in Uganda, alleging that it is just a cover for promoting homosexuality. This will only exacerbate the regional HIV-AIDS crisis. It is past time for concrete action to oppose the persecution of LGBT Ugandans.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs immediately impose targeted sanctions and a visa ban against minister Simon Lokodo and other Ugandan officials who continue to promote hatred against their citizens?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously we share the revulsion that the president of Uganda has signed this mean-spirited, repugnant law into law. We are obviously working with like-minded friends and allies on how best to respond. In 2014, this type of activity and this type of new legislation is completely unacceptable. I share with the member opposite that concrete steps are required to respond to this repugnant act.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are seeing an increasingly disturbing trend from the official opposition these days. Not only are they making up rules to get taxpayers to pay for their offices, but they are also making up facts about our efforts on francophone immigration. Could the minister set the record straight for the House today?

● (1505)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt.

The NDP members love to act self-righteously, but reality always catches up to them, and very quickly, at that. The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst falsely claimed that this year we had reduced services to francophones provided by MAGMA, the Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area. Not only is that incorrect, but in fact we have increased services to francophones. Through our roadmap, the organization can provide training in French adapted to the business community, as well as talking circles in French for new immigrants.

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst—

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear under international law that no one shall be subjected to torture. On this point, the United Nations has called on Canada to bring its ministerial directives in line with the international ban on torture, but the Conservatives have not listened and in fact have refused to sign the optional protocol on torture.

When will the government sign this United Nations agreement and help end torture once and for all?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously Canada has signed the UN convention with respect to torture. There is a supplemental protocol. Obviously, each country has its own internal regime, and obviously Canada internally has a strong and vibrant way to tackle this problem, which is what we are pursuing.

Business of the House

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are fed up with the Conservatives' schemes to sneak their legislative agenda through the back door and by preventing debate.

The outgoing president of the Barreau du Québec strongly condemns the repeated abuse of mammoth bills aimed at curtailing democratic debate. She is also concerned about the reasons for reforms, including to employment insurance, deliberately buried among other measures that are hard on the most vulnerable Canadians.

When will the government stop using such opaque, partisan, and abusive methods to adopt legislation that has this kind of impact on Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is entirely wrong. The approach of this government has been to implement legislation, particularly our budget legislation, that delivers on our commitment to create jobs, economic growth, and prosperity. In the same fashion as it has been done for many years, we introduce budget implementation bills that implement the elements of our budget, and the results are clear in the strongest economic growth among any of the major developed economies and over one million net new jobs.

That is the approach the opposition rejects. It is an approach we are delivering on for Canadians for growth and prosperity for the future.

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

The hon. Minister of Employment and Social Development is rising on a point of order.

* * *

JAN KARSKI

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among all of the parties, and I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to consider the following motion, supported by the member for Parkdale—High Park and the hon. member for Mount Royal, which I offer on this day as we commemorate the national Holocaust commemoration day.

I move that:

Whereas during the darkest period of Europe's history, the young diplomat Jan Karski joined the Polish underground to resist the increasingly horrific atrocities perpetrated in Nazi-occupied Poland during the Second World War; whereas, scarred by what he witnessed in the Warsaw ghetto and the Izbica Lubelska transit camp, into which he was smuggled during a secret mission, Jan Karski took it upon himself to inform the leaders of the Western world of the desperate plight of Polish Jewry; whereas Jan Karski, at great risk to his own life, gave voice to the voiceless by speaking out for the Jewish victims of HaShoah and stood firmly against evil; whereas this year marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Jan Karski, therefore this House recognizes Jan Karski's heroic actions, compassion for the Jewish people, and enduring commitment to human dignity.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: It being Thursday, we will now have the Thursday question from the hon. opposition House leader.

* * *

● (1510)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we were able to see today how question period will unfold when we form the government in 2015. The question and answer period in committee lasted almost two hours with the leader of the official opposition answering the questions properly.

However, it did not last two full hours, because the Conservative chair shut down the committee saying that the leader of the official opposition had answered all the questions. I think Canadians would rather have a government that answers the questions and is ready for them.

This Thursday, I have two questions. For weeks, we have been asking the Prime Minister to come to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to explain his involvement in the controversial database and robocall scandals.

I now hope that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons will say that the Prime Minister will finally come to answer the questions. He does not need to come for two hours. I know that the Conservatives get tired after 40 or 45 minutes. However, it would be nice if he at least came to answer the questions in committee.

I hope he will answer my last question in perfect French. Will he join the NDP caucus in wishing the Canadiens hockey team good luck in their next round of playoffs? Will he join us in saying, "Go Habs, go"?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me start by sharing a couple of sentiments with my friend.

First, on this side of the House—speaking for myself at least, and many others, including the Prime Minister—we congratulate the Montreal Canadiens on their success and wish them all the best in the next round, where I am optimistic Canadians will have much to look forward to.

Second, I have to agree with the member about the fact that what we saw today was a preview of what we would see if the NDP were ever to win government. We saw a grilling where the highlight was the question of NDP corruption and abuse of taxpayers' dollars. That is what we could expect to see if the NDP were ever to become government, and because Canadians know that, we will never have to fear it happening.

That abuse of taxpayers' funds goes beyond the question of breaking rules and not following rules. It goes to the whole NDP philosophy that taxpayers' money is there for them, they should get more of it, and they should spend it in every way possible. That is what the NDP is all about.

We in the Conservative Party, on the other hand, have an approach that is focused on a productive, hard-working, and orderly Parliament that respects taxpayers' dollars. As a result, we will continue with our agenda.

I will note the highlight today from the NDP. The NDP was defending itself on charges of improper spending and improperly using taxpayers' dollars for partisan activity. The member did not point out that the NDP's positive agenda was what they were proposing today in the House of Commons on one of the rare days when NDP members actually get to put forward their own policy proposals. It is funny how he says, "That is not the highlight". I agree with him, because when they do get in power, they will have very little to advocate for.

That said, we on this side do follow the rules, and the rules require that we continue with the NDP opposition day motion for the balance of the day.

Tomorrow we will start the second reading debate of Bill C-27, the veterans hiring act, before we return to our constituencies for a week.

Upon our return we will roll up our sleeves and work hard for Canadians in the final sittings until the summer.

On Monday, May 26, we will consider Bill C-18, which is the agricultural growth act.

On Tuesday, May 27, we will resume the second reading debate on Vanessa's law, Bill C-17, the protecting Canadians from unsafe drugs act.

That will be followed by Bill C-32, the victims bill of rights act at second reading.

The next day will see us continue our productive, hard-working, and orderly agenda by returning to the second reading debate on Bill C-24, the strengthening Canadian Citizenship act. As hon. members might recall, the New Democrats proposed a second reading amendment to block the passage of this important bill.

[*Translation*]

On Thursday, May 29, we will continue the second reading debate on Bill C-22, the Energy Safety and Security Act. After that debate concludes, we will consider Bill C-6, the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act, at report stage. Finally, we will consider Bill C-10, the Tackling Contraband Tobacco Act, at report stage and third reading on Friday, May 30.

Business of Supply

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, we still have a lot of work ahead of us this spring.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CBC/RADIO-CANADA

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When the House last took up the question, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister had 15 minutes remaining for his remarks.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before question period, I was talking a bit about the impact of the economic downturn of 2008, about the decision-making that went into this government's policies that were meant to create jobs and opportunity, and about the fact that this government continued to invest in arts and culture. As has been pointed out by many of the members opposite and members on this side of the House, arts and culture is a significant part of the Canadian economy, responsible for thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic activity, and that is why this government continued to invest in arts and culture. We are one of the only governments that did that, and we did it despite the fact that many opposition members voted against those investments. Members will also recall that as part of that, we did provide significant investments into the CBC.

Let us put into context the type of investments that Canadians are making into the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Over \$1 billion is how Canadian taxpayers support the CBC across this country. Some members in the opposition would say that is not a lot of money. I would counter that by saying that Canadians work very hard. In my riding, my community has done very well despite the downturn, but people work very hard in my community. They are up very early in the morning. A good portion of my riding is rural. The farmers are up at 5:00 in the morning. They are hard at work all day, and they come home very late at night. All they ask from their government—their members of Parliament, councillors, and elected officials at all levels—is that they will do their best to use their money wisely, that they will not waste money, that they ensure that the investments they make are investments that are good not only for the community and the province but for the entire country. That is why this government has continuously made decisions to help support CBC to the tune of \$1 billion. As I mentioned before question period, we reversed a lot of the unilateral cuts that were made by the previous Liberal government.

Business of Supply

We understand on this side of the House the importance of the CBC to different areas of the country. We know that in some rural parts of the country, in aboriginal communities, and in official language minority communities, the CBC is an extraordinarily important venue for entertainment and for information. It is not just about hockey; we get that. That is why this government has continued to offer that support, and Canadian taxpayers have appreciated that support.

However, in the context of returning to a balanced budget, we asked all our partners to participate. Despite that, the CBC has continued to receive over \$1 billion in funding from Canadian taxpayers.

In terms of the impact that arts and culture has on the Canadian culture, before question period I talked about the fact that it is not just about the actors, not just about the front-line people we see whom Canadians are more aware of. It is everything that goes into it. A number of films and TV shows are filmed in and around my community, and what I am most impressed about is all of the people who help support the industry. It is also about carpenters, electricians, the security guards who secure the set, hairdressers, and makeup people. It is all of these people behind the scenes who help support this industry and are responsible for the billions of dollars in economic activity.

I had the great opportunity to visit Cinespace, in the riding of the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. It is an exceptional film studio where hundreds of people are employed. They are doing exceptional work. It is a studio that Canadians should be proud of. Some of the leading films are filmed there. TV shows are filmed there. It is competitive not only across Canada but throughout North America. It is known for being one of the premier sites to film, not just because of its location in the riding of the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, but because of the supports that this government has put in place to help support arts and culture.

• (1520)

When I had the opportunity to visit this studio with the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, one of the things the people there recognized was the fact that the government had helped support the industry through tax cuts. We are putting money back into the hands of people, into the pockets of our small, medium and large business creators. They recognize how important that is. I am proud of the fact that we were able to do that.

When we talk more broadly on the impact of arts and culture, I look at my own riding. We have a wonderful community radio station called WhiStle Radio where a team of volunteers works very hard to put quality programming on the air every day. It is a station of which I am very proud. We also have the Markham guild of artists and the Lemonville Group of Artists. We have Latcham Gallery, where my children attend summer camps and where there are a number of displays of local arts and crafts. Arts and culture is very important, not only to me but to all Canadians. We get that.

However, when we talk about the CBC specifically and some of the challenges it faces right now, it is quite clear that there has been a bit of a different dichotomy for the CBC. Yes, it has lost *Hockey Night in Canada*. That is no surprise to anyone. It was responsible

for a tremendous amount of revenue for the CBC, revenue which it has now lost.

I also had the opportunity to speak with individuals from Rogers. They were successful in obtaining the rights to broadcast *Hockey Night in Canada*. One of the things they talked about was the amount of money they were investing to help support the broadcast of *Hockey Night in Canada* for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. They are spending millions of dollars on new studios, on new talent, and on the people who help support the broadcast to put it on the air. Rogers is a private company. Hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity will be generated by this contract for Rogers.

However, that means something different for CBC. CBC will have to do what others do, and that is try to focus on finding programs that excite Canadians and that will bring Canadians to its channel so it can generate advertising revenue. It cannot just continuously look to the Canadian taxpayer and say that it does not need to have any accountability for the dollars it spends because it will be up to the Canadian taxpayer to cover that shortfall.

When I speak to people at the CBC, they do not see it the same way as many members of the opposition see it. They tell me they can compete, that they have the tools to compete and that they are making the decisions they need to make so they can still be relevant for Canadians across the country, so rural Canadians can have access to the information and high quality programming that some of us in urban Canada have. They understand they have a role to play, that they have to provide services in English and French across the country. They understand that is part of their mandate. They understand Canadians expect them to be in communities. They understand Canadians expect them to do things that maybe we do not expect from our private broadcasters. They also understand the fact that they are given incredible support to do that. I come back again to the fact that it is over \$1 billion, which is a lot of money.

We will continue on this side of the House to support the CBC. We will continue to support arts and culture in general because we understand the importance of it to our Canadian economy. However, what we will not do is what the opposition motion has asked us to do, and that is to set aside accountability, set aside the fact that Canadians work very hard for their money and want us to use their money in the best possible way. It is not just for the CBC; it is for all, across government.

I am very excited by the fact our government will be the first government in the G7 that will return to a balanced budget. This is very exciting for Canadian taxpayers. That will provide us extra resources so we can continue to secure and provide investments for health care and some of the social programs on which Canadians have come to rely. We will continue to make investments across the country in infrastructure so we can create even more jobs and opportunity. It will provide us extra money so we can continue to make investments in our museums.

Business of Supply

•(1525)

I know during question period, there was a discussion about the Canadian Museum of History. What an exciting project that is. It came with a \$25 million investment from this government. This was on top of the other investments we made into all of our national museums through Canada's economic action plan.

Across the country, museums were given extra resources so they could better meet the needs of Canadians. One of the exciting things about the Canadian Museum of History is that it will tie together communities across the country. Large and small museums will be able to access the collections of the Canadian Museum of History.

Another thing ties into this. I really like what CBC is doing, because it understands it also has to shift. It has become a lot more aggressive online. It has a new music portal, where Canadians can go to access music.

We all know that Canadians are finding different ways and avenues to seek entertainment. It is not just the old way of plugging it in, putting up an antenna, and then it is there. Canadians have iPads and computers, and they want to be able to receive their content on the go. The CBC has recognized that and is making investments in those areas to bring it to more Canadians communities, families, and individuals.

We also recognize, and the CBC has done a really good job of this, the importance of some of the historical collections or archives that the CBC has on hand. There is a treasure chest of old reports from the CBC, which it has made available online to Canadians. That is very good news, not only for the CBC but for Canadians.

I recognize and applaud the fact that the CBC has taken it upon itself to not only be the guardian of some of Canada's broadcasting history, but also the guardian of arts and culture in parts of the country where they might not necessarily have access, like we do in urban Canada.

Again, I want to commend the CBC for the initiatives it has taken. We understand there are challenges and that is why we will continue to support the CBC. The broadcasting industry in general has faced a lot of challenges as we move from somewhat of an old school-type of business model to a new business model, where Canadians expect and demand to have services in different ways.

The CBC is moving in that direction, as all Canadian broadcasters are. If we look at where Canadians were a number of years ago and where our broadcasting industry is today, Canadians should have every reason to be extraordinarily proud of how far we have come and what we are accomplishing.

It is not only our artists or our musicians, it is our directors, actors and the people who support them. Canadians are among the best in the world. We have nothing to apologize for. We should be proud of all the people who work in this industry. We should be proud of the fact that arts and culture is so important to the Canadian economy. We should be proud of the fact that as a Parliament, we have supported that industry even in downturns and as the economy was moving in a different direction.

This government made the decision, unlike previous Liberal government that attacked funding for arts and culture, to go the

opposite route and increase funding and support for our museums, radio, TV and broadcasting industry and our musicians. I am very proud of the fact we have done that.

I know the CBC will succeed if we give it the tools it needs, which is what we have done by giving it \$1 billion. It has been around for a long time. It understands what it has to do to succeed.

The CBC is not asking for Parliament to tell it what to do. In fact, it is just the opposite. It values and cherishes its independence as an organization. What it wants Parliament to do is get out of the way and let it do the work it has to do so it can live up to the mandate it has to provide quality services for both French and English across the country and meet the needs of all Canadians.

Since we have been in government, we have guaranteed that the CBC has that independence, and that it has the tools and resources to meet that mandate.

•(1530)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although the government talks about the independence of the CBC, it appoints the president, the CEO and all the board members. Then the government says that the CBC is doing all of this.

The CBC was started in the height of the Depression by a Conservative government because it believed it needed to create an important national institution. The member says that the position of the motion is extreme. The motion asks for two things: the \$45 million in cuts from 2014-15 budget to be reinstated; and to provide adequate and stable funding to the public broadcaster so it can fulfill its mandate.

Why is the member against that, if he actually believes what he just said? This a national institution created by a Conservative government in the heights of the depression when money was an object but the importance of the CBC was recognized.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right. The Conservatives have always been the guardians of Canadian arts and culture. This has been a hallmark of Conservative governments since the beginning. That is why we created the CBC. We understood how important it was to connect Canadians from coast to coast to coast, urban and rural, French and English. It has done a spectacular job in doing that.

We also went further. As I said, when the recession hit, we funded our museums. We funded arts and culture. We increased tax credits. We gave additional funding to the CBC so it could expand Canadian television productions. The results have been quite spectacular. I am proud of what the CBC has accomplished, not only since its inception but through this economic downturn.

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When the member talks about investments, I think most Canadians would appreciate the fact that a billion dollars goes in to support this mandate, which is a very large amount of money. That is a decision we have made.

As I have said, we have increased funding. We have supported the CBC and we will continue to do that because it has a very important mandate.

I appreciate the fact that the member highlighted how important it was that the Conservatives actually created this and have protected arts and culture since coming into government.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a quote for my hon. colleague. This is what the then minister of Canadian Heritage, who today is the Minister of Industry, had to say on *CBC News* in Vancouver, on May 3, 2011, the morning before the Conservative Party's re-election. He stated, "We have said that we will maintain or increase support for the CBC. That is our platform and we have said that before and we will commit to that..."

How can the member explain that budget 2012 took a hatchet to Canada's national broadcaster, slashing it by \$115 million? How can he explain this broken commitment once again from the Conservatives?

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member chooses to ignore the fact that it was this government that increased funding to the CBC substantially, having to reverse the cuts that the Liberals made to the CBC when they were balancing their budgets on the backs of the provinces and individuals, which I think was \$457 million. I could be wrong on the amount, but I know it was to the tune of \$400 million worth of cuts.

We took an opposite approach. We decided we had to protect arts and culture in our country. That is why we increased funding to arts and culture across Canada.

The CBC recognizes the fact that it has lost some important programming that brings advertising revenue in. I trust it will be able to make the types of decisions that will allow it to continue to meet its mandate in English and French throughout Canada. It has the independence to do that. It has proven in the past it can do it, and I suspect it will achieve that goal.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for mentioning the fine work being done in Canada and in my city of Toronto, especially when it comes to film and television production. He also highlighted in his speech the fact that the world of radio and TV broadcasting, content, creation, and film and television production is dynamic and competitive. People have so many channels, so many different platforms to choose from, which is creating depressed prices when it comes to advertising. Therefore, all broadcasters, not just the CBC but private broadcasters also, have to make adjustments.

Would the member comment on some of the adjustments that private broadcasters are making? What are some of the adjustments the CBC also has to make to stay current with what the rest of the world is doing?

●(1535)

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite correct. Obviously, the world of broadcasting has changed.

I am able to listen to my community radio station on my BlackBerry from my office in Ottawa. It is a small community radio station that reaches about 40,000 people, but through the Internet I am able to listen to it and ensure that I know what is going on in my community.

In particular, CBC is also taking a look at other avenues. Its music site allows Canadians to see the latest in Canadian music. It has put a lot more of its collection online. It has put some of the historical material it has online.

The member is quite correct in the fact that private small, medium and large business creators, particularly in this industry, have had to make adjustments as the dollar has changed and as competition has increased. Groups such as Cinespace in his riding have done that very well. It has succeeded and is among the best.

I commend not only the member for his hard work in supporting that job creator in his riding but also that studio for the exceptional work it does. It makes Canadians proud, not only in his community but around the world.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about \$1 billion. A billion dollars per capita today is a dime a day, 10¢ a day or a little less.

We are not talking about money. Money is not the problem. We do have monies in revenues to the government, but the CBC is not the problem. The problem is that we have less than half the large corporate tax rate that the United States has with no criteria at all for job creation or investment.

The Conservatives are doing away with things that have always been an important part of Canada: VIA Rail and postal service. Health services will be next, and environmental protection.

The problem is that it is not about the dime a day. It is about data, science, evidence, and opinions that disagree with the Conservative ideology. Let us increase that dime a day to maybe even a rousing 20¢ a day per Canadian. My constituents in Thunder Bay—Superior North would be willing to pay a lot more to maintain the high quality, especially of CBC Radio.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, this is the problem with the opposition. That question itself, I could actually use that question. I wish I could broadcast that to all Canadians, so they could truly understand the difference between the opposition and the government.

To them, money is meaningless. It is nothing. It does not matter because it is other people's money, but to the people in my riding who work hard, day in and day out, to put money in their pockets so that they can invest in their future and their children's future, invest in their business, and put a little aside for their retirement, an extra dime means a lot.

We are fighting an election in Ontario based on the fact that the Liberal government of Ontario wants to take some \$200 out of the pockets of Ontarians. It might be a little thing to them, but higher taxes kill jobs, and when jobs are killed, there is less tax being paid.

One of the important things a government can do, one of our chief objectives, is to make sure we have enough money to invest for Canadians and their priorities. One of the priorities is the CBC, and that is why we are providing it with \$1 billion.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister is very simple.

In recent years, funding for the CBC has decreased and the corporation has had to make internal cutbacks. As a result, it has had to make changes to programming and has eliminated jobs in key sectors, such as the news sector. The impact is very real.

The Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada and many other civil society organizations are calling for a special parliamentary committee to look at the role of the CBC, in order to determine its mandate, programming and funding. The committee could reach some conclusions that all parliamentarians could debate, and it could hear from witnesses and use that insight to decide what kind of stable, consistent funding the CBC should receive in relation to its mandate.

• (1540)

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we respect the independence of the CBC to make its own decisions, decisions that are important.

Also, of course, there is a mandate that the CBC has to fulfill. We understand that. There is a mandate to meet its obligations in French and English for official language communities. We know that aboriginal communities across this country, in rural and northern parts of this country, depend on CBC Radio. We understand how important that is.

That is why the government provides over \$1 billion in resources to the CBC. That is why, since coming to office, we have made sure it has the resources it needs. That is why we have invested in arts and culture, and that is why this sector is doing so well. That is why there are jobs being created in Etobicoke—Lakeshore. That is why there are jobs being created in Newmarket—Aurora, to support this industry.

I am very proud of that. I am proud of the artists and proud of what Canadians have accomplished. I only wish the opposition would be as proud as we are on this side.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say at the outset that I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Louis-Hébert.

I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak on this important resolution in the House today. It is one that I think the government House leader seemed to regard as being very tiresome, but it is one that is actually extremely important to Canada and the identity of a

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national institution that has been around for a very long period of the time. The motion reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, CBC/Radio-Canada plays a key role in informing, entertaining and uniting Canadians and is today weakened because of the many rounds of cuts over the past 20 years, and calls on the government to: (a) reverse the \$45 million in cuts for 2014-2015 in Budget 2012; and (b) provide adequate, stable, multi-year funding to the public broadcaster so that it can fulfill its mandate.

Frankly, I do not think that is a very big ask, so I do not understand why members opposite seem to be so determined to vote against the motion. From time to time, we hear members across the House castigate even the very existence of the CBC, and they entertained resolutions at their convention to destroy public funding for this important public institution.

As I mentioned in my comments to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, this is an institution that has been around since the 1930s when the Conservative government of the prime minister, Sir Robert Borden, brought in the CBC at the height—

An hon. member: Bennett.

Mr. Jack Harris: It was R.B. Bennett. Sorry, I got the wrong prime minister, in the same era.

During the Depression we had the CBC started as a national institution. Why? It was to assist Canadians in understanding each other, to help create a national identity, and to play an important role in the building of this country. I think it has done so and it continues to do so. Its importance is no less now than it was then.

We see it in every region of this country. We see it in communities that, because of their location and linguistic diversity—Franco-Manitobans and Franco-Ontarians—have separate services. Radio-Canada operates in Quebec and other parts of Canada in the French language. In my region of Newfoundland and Labrador, we have terrific, valuable, important regional programming without which we would know a lot less about other parts of our own province and our own country.

In the Prairies and in agricultural Ontario, there is a great reliance on the special agricultural programming. In the Atlantic region as well, there are fisheries-related programs specially designed to deliver services to people in the country. That is not provided by other broadcasters or private networks.

In the area of the arts, it is extremely important, on a national level in terms of helping to develop a national cultural understanding, bringing artists from one part of the country to the whole country, which has seen a blossoming of the arts in music, songwriting, plays, and theatre, which again in some respects is not provided by the private system. There is obviously cultural and artistic programming throughout the broadcast milieu, but nonetheless the CBC plays the flagship role in that.

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In my own province, for example, one program that is going to be affected by this is something called *The Performance Hour*. It is not disappearing entirely. It is being subsumed into an Atlantic program, but within Newfoundland and Labrador it has been extremely important in bringing professional concert-style recordings with professional sound engineering to the radio, to the broadcast, showcasing local artists, new artists, emerging artists, bands that have become nationally known such as Hey Rosetta! and Great Big Sea, and people like Amelia Curran and Ron Hynes, a Newfoundland treasure in terms of songwriting and performing and a national treasure as well. The CBC deserves credit and acknowledgement of the important role it plays in bringing these out.

● (1545)

There are lots of other examples. I could go on naming great artists, such as Pamela Morgan and Gordon Quinton. Sherman Downey, an artist from Newfoundland and Labrador, recently emerged at a CBC Searchlight contest, winning that with his band called the Ambiguous Case. They are very clever and unique in coming up with these bands' names, but Sherman Downey and the Ambiguous Case won the national CBC Searchlight contest last year, and that came out of the work CBC does in Newfoundland and Labrador and nationally in supporting artists and artistic endeavours.

When we hear the kind of language from members opposite, that they are supporting the CBC and that is why they gave it \$1 billion, what they neglect to say is that it is \$170 million less than the CBC got in 1996. Since 2012, the current government has taken \$115 million away from the CBC. What our party has been talking about and asking for, and asks for in this resolution, is to have some stability in the CBC, not an annual allotment from Parliament depending on whatever the budget has to offer in any particular year, but rather to recognize that CBC/Radio-Canada performs significant and important national institutional roles, and to have stable, multi-year, and adequate funding for the CBC, so it can carry out its mandate. This is a very simple thing. It is an important national, cultural, social, linguistic institution that is part of the Canadian fabric.

I know that, opposite, there is not a lot of respect for institutions. We see the kind of cavalier manner in which the Supreme Court of Canada has been dealt with in recent days by the treatment of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court by the Conservative government, in terms of deriding and casting aspersions about the honour and dignity, and questioning the integrity of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. To what avail, it is unknown, but it clearly shows that the government does not seem to respect the important institutions of our country. Obviously the CBC does not have the same level and importance of constitutional role as the Supreme Court of Canada in what we are now—a constitutional as well as a parliamentary democracy—the important institutional role that the Supreme Court of Canada plays in the balance of institutions between the executive, the Parliament, and the court. However, CBC is important nonetheless.

We see it in other countries: France, the U.K., and Australia. They have national broadcasters with substantially more funding on a per capita basis than we see here in Canada. The Conservatives can talk about \$1 billion as being a lot of money, but if that is inadequate to provide the stable funding necessary to meet the mandate that the

CBC has in this country, then obviously they are not doing a proper job.

One could spend a lot of time talking about the value of CBC to our country. Canadians realize that they know a lot about this country that they would not know if it were not for the CBC/Radio-Canada in terms of its mandate to help us understand one another, to build a sense of national unity, to build a sense of national values that we talk about all the time. When we talk about Canada's national values in the world, in part we are talking about the values that have been shared, created, and developed through the medium of the CBC/Radio-Canada since its inception back in the 1930s. It is an extremely important and valuable institution. It deserves to have adequate, multi-year, stable funding so it can carry out and fulfill its mandate to the people of Canada. That is a very simple request, and I am surprised that it is treated with controversy by members opposite and an unwillingness to recognize that they have played a role in diminishing the capacity of CBC/Radio-Canada to fulfill its mandate by reducing its funding by \$115 million since 2012.

● (1550)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I like to consider myself as a strong advocate for CBC. It is a crown corporation that has done so much in terms of nation building for our country over the years. Its future actually looks fairly promising with the way it is getting engaged with other technologies such as the Internet. I believe that we need to reaffirm the role that CBC can play in our future development as a country.

The question I have for the member is related to the government's approach to CBC as a corporation.

Earlier today I asked a question of the government regarding Canada Post. We had a meeting last night in Winnipeg's north end, and literally hundreds of people showed up. Unfortunately, I had to be here and so I was not there, but I understand the people there were feeling that the government is undermining Canada Post and were questioning whether the government really wants to have Canada Post.

Could the member apply that principle with regard to CBC? We have had members stand in their place and say that CBC English should not exist. Does the member feel that many on the Conservative bench would like to see CBC disappear as a crown corporation, as I believe they do?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, of course, the Conservatives talk about the role of CBC as a crown corporation as if it was just another arm's-length corporation when in fact it is a vital national institution.

Yes, I believe that in the minds of a number of members opposite, and a significant part of the Conservative Party, that CBC would be under existential threat if they had their way. Fortunately, the Canadian public does regard CBC with great importance, wants to see it have stable, long-term funding and does not want to see it disappear.

I think we are on the side of the people in trying to save this corporation and ensure that it does not get cut, like the Conservative government has, and unfortunately, as the hon. member would know, as it was cut by the Liberals in the 1990s to try to save money.

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[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for his speech defending the CBC, our public broadcaster, which the Conservatives are criticizing because it is an independent crown corporation. In fact, it is quite clear that the CBC is a federal public institution that exists by virtue of the Broadcasting Act and that has cultural, linguistic, social and identity objectives.

A number of francophone journalists from Radio-Canada, including Céline Galipeau, Patrice Roy, Alain Gravel and Pierre Craig, recently appeared on the program *Tout le monde en parle* to speak out against all the cuts to CBC/Radio-Canada and the lack of public consultation and debate regarding those cuts. The corporation can bring in money. I would like to quote the following:

A program like *Enquête*, without which the Charbonneau Commission would not have seen the light of day, is one of the most compelling examples of Radio-Canada's contribution to our country's democratic health. The revelations that saved Canadian taxpayers tens of millions of dollars would not have come to light without the resources we have at our disposal.

There is a return for us. Programs like *Enquête* are made only by public broadcasters such as Radio-Canada and CBC. They are extremely useful for Canadians and they will disappear because the Conservatives are just sitting back.

Actually they are not sitting back. They are slashing budgets and reducing the effectiveness of our journalists. That is truly unfortunate.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

• (1555)

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I agree with my colleague. She has made some extremely important points about the role of CBC/Radio-Canada.

In the Broadcasting Act, where CBC's national mandate is set out, it is not simply another corporation that is expected to make money and provide a service. It has a national mandate, and the press, known as the "fourth estate" in democratic parliaments, after the courts, parliament, and the executive, plays an important role. The member has outlined one of them in terms of investigative reporting providing information about what is going on in our country and provinces. She mentioned the Charbonneau commission in Quebec as a result of that investigative journalism. It is extremely important and vital for our democracy.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are days when I would rather not speak in the House, and today is one of them. Why? The reason is that a Canadian institution is under attack, and those who are trying to destroy it are claiming that it is not their fault.

I would like to read part of a letter that someone sent to Radio-Canada Québec this week:

We are hoping that Radio-Canada will keep the Saturday morning radio show *La musique parle* hosted by Ms. Martin. We also hope that the quality of regional programming will be maintained. Here is a modest contribution to help ensure that that is the case.

The person sent a cheque to Radio-Canada. Have we gotten to that point? Have we honestly fallen that low in a country as rich as ours?

I ask that because in a country as big and diverse as ours, we need something to unite us. When I say "unite", I mean it in the sense of communicating and hearing others talk about sports, economics, politics, current events and so on. We need to know what is happening and we need to know that people in more remote areas are not paying just because of where they live. People who speak a minority language in one part of the country should not be penalized for speaking that language. People who want to know what is happening outside our borders and who want to hear about international news must be able to get that information. That is part of CBC's mandate. There needs to be an institution that fills that role. That mandate is currently under attack.

I am always surprised to hear the government say that it loves CBC and then turn around and make cuts to the corporation. Over the course of 25 years, under both the Liberals and the Conservatives, more than 42% of CBC's budget has been slashed. It is time to be honest.

When the constituent whose letter I read to you gave an interview to the local media, he simply said that what he wants is to listen to news from his community on his public broadcaster. If cuts continue to be made, that will not be possible.

Earlier, my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry spoke about the hosts who came together to take a stand. One of them said that, for several years, Radio-Canada's budget for French-language information had been chopped by 20%. Of course that has repercussions. Do we still want a quality service? Do we still need news of each other, meaning do we still want to know what other people are doing, and vice versa? I feel that it is important. Actually, it is essential.

Of course, we have some private broadcasters who do a number of things. However, we can agree that, if a mandate is not profitable, they will not fulfill it. That is normal; they are private companies. They have to make money first and foremost, we understand that. However, for ourselves, we can provide a service that is not all that expensive.

Just now, someone from the government said that \$1 billion is a lot of money. Let us forget the number, and let us look at some comparisons. A few years ago, the average contribution in western countries was \$87 per person. I am including countries like Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, France, the United States and Japan. In Canada, we are down to \$29 per person, one third of the average contribution. That is happening in a country that, by the way, is way bigger than a lot of others, and in which all those other countries would probably fit.

• (1600)

Moreover, not only do we have remote areas, we also have two cultures and two languages, among other things.

In the United Kingdom, the contribution to the BBC is \$111 per capita, even under a Conservative government. Here, we are going from \$34 to \$29 per capita. Yes, \$1 billion is a lot of money, but we have to ask ourselves, "what price our identity?" That is why we are having this debate today. It is urgent.

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It is absurd to hear the Minister of Canadian Heritage say that the cuts and the firings are someone else's fault. The Conservative government has appointed the last 12 CBC directors, nine of whom are contributors to the party. I would really prefer appointments to boards of directors to be people who have nothing to do with political parties. We should have independent board members. It is essential for the management of this crown corporation to be able to meet the challenges facing it, because challenges there are.

We know that the 21st century is a century of adaptation and that new technologies are ubiquitous. We know that conventional television will have a tougher time. The government has been talking about the decline in ad revenue at the CBC, but what is it doing to help? It cuts the corporation's budget even more. There have been two budget cuts. That is not right. Does the government even want the public broadcaster? What does it want, actually? That is why I thank my colleague for moving this motion because we must discuss what we want from our public broadcaster. What service do we want it to provide?

The budget cuts are so deep that the very mission of the broadcaster is in jeopardy. That is my personal opinion. It may not be the opinion across the way. Is that what we want? Do parliamentarians from both sides of the House want CBC to stop fulfilling its mandate? I would really like to know because it is important. If that is what the Conservative government wants, then it should say so.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage says it is not her fault that hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts resulted in positions being cut. As the minister, she knows that the organization has to adapt to the cuts and that there will be consequences. This is a blatant and pathetic illustration of the fact that the Conservatives are not fit to govern. They do not know what they are doing. They do not know that their actions have consequences. They think that the CBC operates in a bubble. That is not true. It is not immune to inflation, salary increases for its employees and its other obligations.

Do we want to keep this institution? My message is clear: we must keep it.

● (1605)

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, for my colleague opposite, I was just sitting here looking through the annual report from CBC/Radio-Canada and I could not readily identify the amount of funding spent on managerial salaries versus technical or operational support salaries. Could he support a greater breakdown of that and could he elaborate on what his desired ratio of management to technical or operational staff would be on that particular concern?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her question.

There are two things that I think are very important. I said during my speech that this is a period of transformation and that media companies have to adapt quickly to new realities. Dwelling on ratios, as the minister suggests, is unrealistic at this time. However, the right thing to do is to work together on defining what we want from the public broadcaster and provide support for that change.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Today, in a parliamentary committee, I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage how she felt about the fact that her predecessor had initially promised that CBC's budget would never be cut, and that he might even increase it, only to break his promise by cutting the budget by \$115 million. She told me that she did not do it and that she had nothing to do with it.

How could my colleague explain that a minister would distance herself from her ministerial responsibility and loyalty to the government if not for the fact that she is very embarrassed that her party once again broke its promise?

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I wonder if she is embarrassed or if she does not understand the consequences of her actions. What I am saying is very serious. I sincerely hope that what my colleague has suggested is correct. However, if she really is convinced that cutting more than \$100 million from an organization, whether a public or private entity, will not have consequences or ones that do not concern her, I wonder what she is doing there.

● (1610)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Louis-Hébert for his speech.

He raised some important points in his speech. In fact, since the arrival of the Conservative government, the gap between rich and poor, and also between men and women, has widened. Furthermore, he also pointed out that the cuts to CBC will further increase the gaps, particularly between the regions and urban centres.

CBC's mandate is much broader than what is on paper. Consider Radio Canada International and also the reputation of this institution, which is internationally renowned.

We know that CBC is a vehicle for broadcasting Quebec and Canadian culture and how that is so important in a North American context.

I would like him to elaborate on CBC's broader mandate.

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, which gets to the heart of this debate: do we still want to share something as a people? When we talk about culture, we are talking about sharing something. Do we still want to share something? Is that what we want, or do we want everyone locked up in their own homes, in their own little world, thinking that nothing is possible, that we cannot communicate with each other, can no longer express ourselves or create?

I prefer to look at things more positively. I absolutely think we need to have spaces to communicate with each other, to express ourselves, to show our creativity and abilities and, with the help of new technologies, to share them with the whole world. That is why I am proud of an institution like the CBC.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before resuming debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised at the time of adjournment are as follows: the member for Malpeque, Public Safety; the member for Louis-Hébert, Intergovernmental Relations; the member for Vancouver Quadra, Natural Resources.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.

[*English*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is what the then Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, today the Minister of Industry, had to say on *CBC News* in Vancouver on May 3, 2011, the morning before the Conservative Party's re-election:

We have said that we will maintain or increase support for the CBC. That is our platform and we have said that before and we will commit to that.

Unfortunately, the Conservative government once again broke its commitment. Budget 2012 took a hatchet to Canada's national broadcaster, slashing \$115 million from the budget.

[*Translation*]

That figure is a known fact. It is on page 34 of the 2014-15 estimates. Since the Conservatives came to power in 2006, CBC/Radio-Canada has lost \$227 million in parliamentary appropriations, in 2014 dollars, which is equivalent to a cut of 18%—nearly one-fifth—of its budget.

Furthermore, CBC/Radio-Canada lost \$7 million with the reduction of the Canada media fund and \$47.1 million as a result of the CRTC's decision to put an end to the local programming improvement fund. When I asked a question in the House about how the cuts were affecting CBC/Radio-Canada, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages replied that the government was not involved in the corporation's decision to cut to services and jobs. How can she make such a claim? The budget cuts imposed by the government are certainly forcing the corporation to make drastic decisions, such as eliminating 657 full-time jobs and cutting a number of programs.

Today, in parliamentary committee, the minister told me that she was not the one who promised not to cut the CBC/Radio-Canada budget in 2011, only to cut it in 2012. She dissociated herself from her government. It is understandable that she did not want to be associated with a broken promise. In this context, it would be wrong to liken the cry of alarm from CBC employees to a corporatist reaction. Yes, the CBC is slowly dying, and we are reaching a breaking point.

It is important to realize that our public broadcaster has been living in the shadow of budget cuts since 1990. According to CBC/Radio-Canada's figures, in 2014 dollars, the corporation received \$1,673,000,000 in parliamentary appropriations in 1990 and, in 2014, is receiving no more than \$1,038,000,000, which represents a 38% decrease. Naturally, the combined effect of these cuts has weakened the institution. CBC/Radio-Canada has quantified the results.

Following recent cuts to parliamentary appropriations, the reduction of the Canada media fund and the elimination of the local

programming improvement fund, the amount allocated by the government to the public broadcaster is only \$29 per Canadian. That is much less than the \$87 average for other developed democracies. Per resident, countries like Japan, Spain, Belgium and France financially support their public broadcaster twice as much as we do; Austria and the United Kingdom, three times more; Germany and Sweden, four times; Switzerland and Norway, five times. Only the United States and New Zealand are cheaper than we are.

Is there another country that needs a public broadcaster more than we do? Ours produces more national programming than all the private broadcasters combined. It offers local talents an irreplaceable springboard. It almost single-handedly provides broad coverage of international news. It is the only one to be required to provide programming that reflects a diverse country with two official languages, a country the size of a continent. It admirably serves the French cause in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, in addition to providing English-speaking Canada a voice that differs from the voice of American culture.

More than ever, Canada needs a quality public broadcaster. However, the broadcaster must receive the means it needs to carry out its mission in a rapidly changing world. The CBC does not have those means.

• (1615)

The corporation is increasingly forced to go after advertising revenue, at the risk of undermining its special status as a public service.

As our friends from the CBC remind us, our public broadcaster has increased its TV advertising by 33% since 2012, from 12 minutes to 16 minutes per hour. However, not only is the advertising market more segmented than ever, with 742 competing channels, but it is difficult to succeed when, like the CBC, a broadcaster does not have access to revenue from digital broadcasting. In a decade, the revenue from digital content has caught up with and is now exceeding the advertising revenue of traditional television.

CBC/Radio-Canada must stop being haunted by budget cuts that, year after year, are forcing the broadcaster to take a short-term patchwork approach. It is high time to provide the corporation with the resources it needs for proper planning—like the resources BBC has—and with multi-year, stable and predictable funding, over a five-year period perhaps.

The Broadcasting Act must be reviewed, because it has not been reviewed since 1991. The act does not even address digital content. It is crucial to reaffirm the independence of the public broadcaster, and as a first step to restore its autonomy in labour relations, which have been undermined by the Conservative government.

• (1620)

[*English*]

To justify the current cutbacks, the Conservative government often mentions those made by the Liberals, but that argument cannot hide a fundamental difference. We Liberals were forced to cut government spending to eliminate the huge structural deficit left behind by the previous Conservative government.

Business of Supply

Despite that, we kept to the objective of preserving the public service, because we believed in its mission. As soon as the budget was balanced, we cautiously resumed investment in government action. That was true for CBC/Radio-Canada.

It is a fact that the Chrétien government had to reduce our public broadcaster's budget to get the nation's finances back in order. However, we did our best to protect its ability to fulfill its core mission, and once the budget was balanced, the Liberal government invested in the prestigious institution.

What a difference from today's situation, with the Conservative government imposing repeated drastic cutbacks on CBC/Radio-Canada motivated not so much by financial necessity as by the ideologically motivated desire of a large part of the Conservative caucus to dismantle this public institution.

It is a given that the Liberal government, if elected by Canadians in 2015, will impose an ironclad fiscal discipline on itself. However, this discipline will be based on proven and impartial data, not on ideological obsessions like the one of the Conservative government against the CBC.

The Liberal Party will combine fiscal discipline and firm support for CBC/Radio-Canada, as we believe that a strong public broadcaster is a critical part of maintaining and promoting Canada's diverse and rich culture in both official languages.

Conservative cuts have served as a severe setback for both the development and diffusion of innovative bilingual programming and have undermined CBC/Radio-Canada's capacity to fulfill its mandate, especially as it works to realign operational models to reflect 21st century program and consumption demands.

[Translation]

This brings us to motion moved by our colleague, the hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, who is calling on the House to:

- (a) reverse the \$45 million in cuts for 2014-2015 in Budget 2012; and
- (b) provide adequate, stable, multi-year funding to the public broadcaster so that it can fulfill its mandate.

The Liberal opposition supports this motion in that it is consistent with what we have been saying for some time now.

We would also add the notice of motion moved unsuccessfully, unfortunately, on May 13, 2014, by my Liberal colleague, the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain that the Standing Committee on Official Languages undertake a study on the impact of budget cuts on Radio-Canada's programming for rural and urban francophone communities across the country.

There are many more things to be done, but the most important is for the government itself to truly believe in the essential mandate of a top-notch public broadcaster. The government must acknowledge that CBC/Radio-Canada provides an essential service to Canadians. It must acknowledge that and prove it through tangible actions, starting with supporting this motion.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for stating his intention to support the motion and for his speech and the intellectual honesty he has displayed time and again, particularly by mentioning the cuts

that his own party made in the 1990s. I admire his intellectual honesty. I would like to say the same about his entire team, but I think he is on his own.

However, I would like to say to the hon. member that in my most recent remarks to the House I mentioned the extent of the partisanship on the CBC/Radio-Canada board of directors. I would like to know whether the hon. member has an idea or suggestion regarding the composition of this board of directors and the appointments that are made to it.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I also thank him for the motion and the work that we do together on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Indeed, we do have concerns in that respect. However, we are cautious. I would not want to assume anything about the existing board, but I do not like how its members are appointed and the fact that there are no criteria.

Just like we are proposing for the Senate, even though the hon. member belongs to a party that has doubts about what we want to do with the Senate, we need to minimize partisanship for all appointments. There are ways to achieve that. Our committee should receive a new mandate to determine which criteria and what process could be established to have less partisan appointments in organizations that are not supposed to be partisan bodies.

● (1625)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we go to the next question, I noticed some looks of surprise when I took the first question from the New Democratic Party. It being an opposition day today, normally after a Liberal member has just spoken, the first question would go to the party that has proposed the motion on the floor today. Then we would go in the normal rotation.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened very attentively to the member's speech. He reminds me of the *Li'l Abner* character Joe Btfsplk, who always has a cloud over his head and everything is doom and gloom.

I just want to share some very good news about media, entertainment, and television in this country. The Ontario Media Development Corporation published its latest results. It has been a banner year once again in Ontario, \$1.1 billion, the third year in a row with an all-time high.

Business of Supply

Right in my own riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore, are productions like *Lost Girl*, season five, which is very successful on the Showcase network; *Rookie Blue*, season five, which is on Global; *The Strain*, which has drawn the greatest film and television producer from Mexico, Guillermo del Toro, which is on the FX network in its first season; *Beauty and the Beast*, season two; and *Reign*, which is on CTV. These are all great things that are happening in this country.

Members will notice in my comments that none of it seems to be happening on CBC. It is just a challenge for CBC to produce the shows that Canadians want to watch. It is a competitive industry. There is all kinds of fabulous work going on in Ontario and across the country. The challenge is for CBC to do its work and produce those great shows. We know it is capable of doing it, but it is certainly not all doom and gloom.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right to say that Canada has enough resilience to resist the doom-and-gloom government we have today. It is good news to find out what Canadians are able to do despite the government.

I am disappointed that my colleague did not take the opportunity to answer the question I asked his government, which was why it committed to never cut the CBC. I have the quote of the then minister of Canadian Heritage the day after the electoral victory of the Conservative government. He said:

We have said that we will maintain or increase support for the CBC. That is our platform and we have said that before and we will commit to that.

The Conservatives broke their commitment. How does the member feel about that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague provide comment regarding our minority communities here in Canada? Right offhand, I am thinking of Saint Boniface in Manitoba, for example, and how valuable a role the CBC plays in having the multicultural, bilingual services that are provided through its network.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, although he knows the answer better than I do. He is so close to his community. He knows how much Radio-Canada is key for Franco-Manitobans and throughout the country.

For many communities, it is the only way by which they may have news in their language. Can members imagine that? All of us have a lot of choices. Some of us have no other choice apart from Radio Canada. We should never forget that.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was kind of surprised earlier today to hear some responses from the government side. About 25 years ago, I was part of Bell bargaining, for the union side. Before we sat down to start discussing bargaining with Bell, we looked at its budget and what the opportunities were for us to gain from the productivity of the company.

When we do that, we look at a total revenue pie. In this place, we had the members from the other side talking about the fact that when the CEO of CBC looked down at his revenue pie, and there was a reduction in his revenue that caused him to have to make cuts to CBC, of course it was not the government's cut to the revenue. That is kind of ludicrous. I would say that it borders on mismanagement.

• (1630)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, of course we should ask more of CBC to have better results. However, the fact is that it does not have access to digital revenues as much as the private sector for the very simple reason that the private sector is able to merge and have companies that are directly in the digital economy. This is something that CBC cannot have. In addition, we have 747 channels in competition there.

Therefore, to say to CBC that it has to do it on its own, the question is which public broadcaster has been able to do that anyway? Most of them are supported by the state three to four times more than CBC.

We have to choose, as Canadians. Do we want to have a public broadcaster? Do we believe in it in the 21st century, and do we want to invest in it as we should? I am sure that the answer will be yes. We will see that at the next election.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to pass on the moment in recognizing how we talked about the francophone community, but we do not want to limit it to just radio. In fact, if we take a look at CBC as a whole, we will find that many of the international talents that we have today originated from CBC. CBC has, in many ways, provided opportunities for Canadians who would not have had those opportunities had we not had the crown corporation of CBC.

Might the member want to add some comments to that?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, it would be difficult to find another public broadcaster doing more to raise local talents than CBC/Radio Canada in any country that we could imagine. It is incredible what it has been able to do.

I am from a province, Quebec, where a lot of what we call the Quiet Revolution came from Radio Canada. A lot of the stars of the Quiet Revolution were raised and developed and learned their skills through Radio Canada.

We cannot overestimate what that means for local talents in Canada and for Canadian content, if we compare it with the fact that all of the other broadcasters together have less Canadian content than CBC alone.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartier, who just made a speech. He reminded us of the importance of having a public broadcaster like the CBC, not only for Canadian culture, but also for the Quebec, French Canadian and English Canadian cultures.

Could he elaborate on the difference between a public and a private broadcaster and their respective mandates? Also, how important is the public broadcaster in terms of how it contributes to the development of Canadian talent?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question.

Business of Supply

CBC's mandate is unique. It consists in educating and informing people. Take, for example, the coverage by foreign correspondents. It is increasingly difficult for the corporation to provide that coverage. However, private sector coverage is also decreasing. Therefore, if Canadians want to have journalists abroad, they will have to rely more and more on CBC.

We need a public broadcaster to carry out several of our public missions. The private sector has its own priorities and we understand that. Private businesses must make ends meet and they must make profits. That is fine and I have nothing against that. However, a public broadcaster has a vital role to play in a country like Canada.

● (1635)

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

Today, I will talk about things that people under the age of 40 know nothing about. I will also talk about things that people in the rest of Canada know nothing or very little about: the tremendous contribution that the French arm of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has made to the development of the Quebec nation's identity.

Radio-Canada first entered Quebec homes over radio and television airwaves during the time known as the “grande noirceur”, the great darkness. We were an oppressed and nearly voiceless people.

To Quebecers, Radio-Canada's French network is more than a television network. It was one of the most powerful enablers of our collective emancipation. If the Quebec nation is aware of its distinct nature within North America, if it is aware that it is a distinct society within Canada, I believe that is due in large part to the amazing legacy bequeathed to us by Radio-Canada broadcasts.

That is why I get worried when the government cuts funding for our French-language public broadcaster. Radio-Canada is a diamond, and if you want to bring out the best in a diamond, you do not use a hammer. You use knowledge and finesse to make it even more beautiful and useful. That is not what I am seeing now in the government's cuts to the corporation.

Will the government continue to weaken and emasculate this cultural tool that is critically important to maintaining the French fact in North America?

I remember when we were kids sitting in front of the TV. The first time we turned the TV on, Radio-Canada had just come on the air. We saw that picture of the Indian who was waiting, just like we were, for the shows to start. Little did we know that our world was about to change.

I am a child of the Quiet Revolution. I am a child of the public schools, but there is something else I am proud of: I am a child of Radio-Canada. I watched *La Boîte à surprise*, and there are others here who remember it. Those programs were catalysts and incubators for Quebecers' creativity, and that creativity is now our calling card internationally in both arts and culture and in business.

I remember *Sol et Gobelet*, those two wild and crazy guys played by Favreau and Durand, who looked at spaces and objects in different ways. In those two characters, how can we not see a foreshadowing of what Robert Lepage would do in his productions? They are not so different. That is where the ideas were hatched. I think back to *La Ribouldingue*, with Mandibule, Bedondaine, Paillason, Friponneau, Dame Plume and Giroflée. After them came the casts of the Cirque du Soleil. There is not a lot of creative distance between the imaginary world that Radio-Canada created for children and what has now been created for children and grown-ups the world over. That was where it came to life: on Radio-Canada.

Growing up with an imaginary world is fantastic. At the same time, our eyes were opened to this planet. Our eyes were opened and our minds were inspired by fantastic voices, francophone voices. My mind goes back to Henri Bergeron opening *Les beaux dimanches*: “Mesdames et messieurs, bienvenue, voici *Les Beaux dimanches*”.

What we were seeing on television was the dawning of our culture. I remember seeing Michel Tremblay's play *Hosanna*, with that incredible transvestite as a character. That is where the darkness from which we were emerging gave way to the light ahead.

● (1640)

I also remember the joy in listening to the wonderful, intelligent voices of Jean-Maurice Bailly and René Lecavalier. They hosted *La soirée du hockey* and dissected every hockey game using their words as precisely and skilfully as if they were master craftsmen. They were magicians of the spoken word and masters of French. That was the Radio-Canada of my childhood. They introduced us to all our heroes on skates, of course, and they were francophone heroes. That told us that we Quebecers were good and quick on our skates too. That is what those commentators told us. It was wonderful.

On another level, I remember René Lévesque on *Point de mire*. René Lévesque, the greatest Quebec premier in history, ensured Quebec's survival for decades to come with Bill 101, which allows us to integrate immigrants into the French language in Quebec. I remember one episode of *Point de mire* in particular. René Lévesque was talking about the importance of unions in society. He had his blackboard—he always worked with a blackboard—and talked about capital—not a word we hear a lot—about trade unions and about the importance of the balance between the two in ensuring that wealth was distributed. That is what unions were for. To me, it seems that the show should be rerun quite often. The members opposite would learn a lot from that show and from that great man.

There are also the women of CBC television who paved the way for the emancipation of women in Quebec. I am thinking of Aline Desjardins, Jeannette Bertrand and Lise Payette, to name but a few. I remember how my father hated them. He said that those women got my mother all worked up. She no longer wanted to prepare the meals or iron my father's shirts. My father accused the women of CBC television of having an influence on this behaviour. The women of CBC/Radio-Canada made us better men, better fathers, better husbands, and better partners. Those women changed us and Quebec society. That is why we are proud of CBC/Radio-Canada.

Business of Supply

On my way here I was remembering other shows such as *Quelle famille!* We watched that show every week. We identified with the characters in the shows we watched: *Les Couche-Tard* with Roger Baulu and Jacques Normand; the major dramas, such as *Un homme et son péché*—22 years of avarice—and *Le temps d'une paix* with Rose-Anna and Ti-Coune. I do not think there is a French network in the world that has produced as many fine shows with as much creativity and connection to a people as the French section of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

I could go on for an hour celebrating all the magic this institution created back home, but the underhanded attack on the news service concerns me. The news service is affected by the latest cuts and that doubly concerns me. For one thing, it is the main news source, not to mention the most consistent and most reliable one, that we have in Quebec. For another, this affects Mr. Gravel's team of journalists on the program *Enquête* in particular.

If Alain Gravel were living in the United States, he would have won the Pulitzer Prize. The first-hand information he gathered that led to the Charbonneau commission is the type of information that brings down governments. I hope that Radio-Canada will not suffer unduly as a result of these cuts because I expect that our very own Eliot Ness will come stick his nose in the Conservatives' business. He would come to Ottawa, look at SNC-Lavalin's contracts and the Conservative donors and see whether there are some front men involved. That is the type of journalism we need and it is going to be affected by these cuts. I find that truly dangerous for democracy.

• (1645)

The Conservative government started by going after scientists, whose findings and studies it does not like, and now it is turning toward journalists, whose investigations and analyses it does not like. What are things coming to? That is my question.

On that note, I agree to answer some questions.

Congratulations to my colleague.

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, typically when we look, even in government, at the services we offer, we try to define what they are and what they mean. I would think in this case, with CBC, across the board, it would be the content it delivers or broadcasts. My colleague talked a lot about content. I would say that one of the metrics is whether the content is being consumed and enjoyed by Canadians and whether Canadians are finding it of utility. Part of the metrics around that, and I am not saying all, but a good chunk, would be the revenue it receives from advertisers in terms advertisers being willing to pay for a spot during the content.

As I look at the consolidated statement of income in CBC's 2012-13 annual report, if I read it correctly, I see a \$45-million decrease in advertising revenue year over year. I am wondering if my colleague opposite would agree with me that it is an indication that perhaps there needs to be some process adjustment in terms of the content being delivered, if Canadians are enjoying it, and whether he believes that, in fact, CBC should continue to increase its programming and services around advertising.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the funding for the institution, I think I spent 10 minutes explaining that the essence of this corporation does not lie in the number of ads it shows or the number of viewers it has, but rather in its ability to inspire people to see and recognize themselves, to understand each other and to be informed. I personally question the whole issue of ads on public television. I do not want to speak for my party on this matter, but honestly, since the minister asked me the question, I change the channel whenever there is an ad.

[English]

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very important question for my colleague. I appreciate his comments, but I want to ask him about a pattern of conduct in the government with respect to crown corporations of this kind.

Five or six years ago, I began raising the spectre of the privatization of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, and the government scoffed. That was before it sold it off at fire-sale prices to SNC-Lavalin, and now it is privatizing the management of our isotope production facility in Chalk River.

A second crown corporation in play now is Canada Post. It has been seriously weakened. A plan was put out by the PMO and rubber-stamped by Canada Post. Third is VIA Rail, which was cut by 15% last year.

My question for the member is very simple. We appear to be on the slippery slope to the privatization of a number of crown corporations. Can he help us understand what his perspective is in this regard? I ask because my constituents in Ottawa South are furious about these cuts.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, that is the Conservative and neo-liberal line: private companies do things better than public corporations. Surreptitiously and gradually, public services are allowed to deteriorate so that it becomes easy to justify doing away with them and moving toward the private sector. The Conservatives have completely forgotten the concept of public service. Just like Margaret Thatcher's neo-liberal supporters, the Conservatives think we live in a vast market. Everything is about the market. That is not true. We can live in a society with institutions that connect people with each other.

• (1650)

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague about CBC as a tool for bringing families together.

Business of Supply

My father grew up watching a beautiful show called *Les belles histoires des pays d'en haut*, which reflects our reality and our past as Quebecers. When they rebroadcast the show, I sat next to my father and watched it with him. I talked to him about how he grew up, about how things were for him and his father, my grandfather. I think that this type of show, which was broadcast on Radio-Canada between 1956 and 1970, played an incredible role.

Could my colleague talk about other shows that had an impact on Canadian and Quebec families? What does he think?

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question and for what he shared.

Claude-Henri Grignon, who wrote *Un homme et son péché* and the entire series that followed, *Les belles histoires des pays d'en haut*, is sort of like our Pagnol. The show is set in a small village with archetypal characters, villains, stories and gossip. He created a universe that was a lot like Pagnol's.

I am pleased that young people are enjoying the show and its legacy. It is part of our history. Of course, there is a romantic aspect to it, but there are many parts of the series that reflect what our ancestors experienced. I am pleased to hear that the member enjoyed it.

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to defend our public broadcaster because I believe that we should be talking about this institution. I would have preferred to be talking about it in different circumstances. This time, we are talking about it because there has been another wave of Conservative cuts.

I will reread the motion moved in the House by my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher:

That, in the opinion of the House, CBC/Radio-Canada plays a key role in informing, entertaining and uniting Canadians and is today weakened because of the many rounds of cuts over the past 20 years, and calls on the government to: (a) reverse the \$45 million in cuts for 2014-2015 in Budget 2012; and (b) provide adequate, stable, multi-year funding to the public broadcaster so that it can fulfill its mandate.

I would like to start by talking about CBC's mandate. The Conservatives have been telling us all day that advertising revenues are down, and my colleague just asked if a public broadcaster should have advertising. That is not what today's debate is about, but I want to discuss the mandate. We have a law governing public broadcasters in Canada. If the law requires CBC/Radio-Canada to fulfill a mandate, it must be given the means to do so. It is not about whether the advertising brings in enough money. The government is not giving the broadcaster the means to fulfill the mandate conferred on it by law. That is the saddest part of all this.

These \$130 million in cuts will have a direct impact. For example, these cuts mean that funding for the CBC will be \$29 per Canadian in 2014-15. This means that \$29 of my taxes will go to CBC/Radio-Canada.

A very interesting table by Nordicity compared countries and found that the average contribution to public broadcasters per inhabitant is \$82. In Norway it is \$180; in Switzerland it is \$164; in Germany it is \$124; and in Denmark it is \$116. Some countries contribute a bit less than that: France and Belgium contribute \$68. The only two countries who contribute less than us to their public

broadcaster are New Zealand and the United States. I find that unbelievable. I want to congratulate CBC/Radio-Canada, because with funding of just \$29 per inhabitant, it still manages to provide high-quality news and content in French and English.

We are giving the CBC less and less money. In 2012, \$82.4 million was cut from English services, \$42.3 million was cut from French services and \$4.7 million was cut from corporate services. That resulted in the elimination of 657 full-time jobs: 573 immediate losses and others to come in the future, including 35 positions at the news service.

As my colleagues have said, the information we get from the CBC is very important. It teaches us about current events and politics, and it tells us what is going on around the world and at home. I do not want to criticize other broadcasters, but the CBC has a standard. If there are not enough producers, investigators and researchers to find all of this information, we will end up in a black hole where the information is lower quality and is increasingly less relevant and insightful.

I want to talk about the cuts that could have a tangible effect on my constituents. The CBC has cancelled two cooking shows and one original series. It has made a 50% cut to regional live music productions.

• (1655)

At Radio-Canada, a cut targets two journalists and one producer of the program *Enquête*. As we know, this program in Quebec was the first to shed light on the whole saga of public financing in the construction industry. Without *Enquête*, there would have been no Charbonneau commission. That commission is currently shedding light on many disturbing facts in our province. However, it is the quality and thoroughness of *Enquête* that made this possible.

There will be fewer episodes of the show *Quelle histoire!*, which is produced in Ottawa-Gatineau, fewer musical programs on Radio-Canada, and fewer original episodes for flagship shows. Moreover, nostalgia series, presented between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m., will be replaced by an American show. This is called americanization.

Radio-Canada reflects our identity. It talks about us, about our uniqueness, about the Quebec reality, about the French fact. Now, we will find ourselves with yet another American show. This means fewer jobs for Canadian actors and producers.

The government wants to keep the economy going. After reducing Radio-Canada's budget, it goes without saying that jobs had to be cut. They must have figured that it would be cheaper to broadcast an American show. We are losing yet another part of our identity here.

The end of the sport news in the evening is tragic. On the radio, the show *Par 4 chemins* is being eliminated, as are *La tête ailleurs* and *Culture physique*. We will no longer have a public broadcaster that talks about amateur sport. We will no longer have that.

All these cuts are in addition to others included in budget 2012: massive cuts to the service provided by Radio Canada International, an expansion plan for regional stations put on hold, and the shelving of the development of a website, *Kids' CBC*. This is very sad. We are heading into a situation where CBC/Radio Canada will no longer control its content. This is what is happening.

Business of Supply

Earlier, my colleague told us about the show *Les belles histoires des pays d'en haut*. I met a woman from my riding who works at CBC/Radio-Canada. Unfortunately, I cannot name her for obvious reasons. She told me that they were showing *Les belles histoires des pays d'en haut* because it is cheaper than current original content or production. Those are the facts. CBC/Radio-Canada has less money. Consequently, it shows programs that cost less.

Why do we always see the same people on CBC? There are some popular actors and some not-so-popular ones, but we always see the same people because they cannot take the risk of trying to find something new. Last fall, I watched *Série noire* on TOU.TV. It was an incredible series, new and different. I told my friends about it, and some of them liked it while others did not.

The woman I mentioned earlier told me that Radio-Canada was not sure if it was going to go ahead with the series because it had to consider the ratings and advertising; otherwise, it could not afford to do the series. The number of stations is increasing. There is more demand for advertising. We know what advertising is like these days. I see it on the Internet. Of course I fast forward through the ads. I do not watch them.

The Conservatives are saying that there is less advertising so they need to make cuts. Clearly, it will not work if they are relying solely on advertising. There is no doubt about that. CBC/Radio-Canada has original content. It is defined by the fact that it does not carry all of the same type of shows that private broadcasters do.

Of course, that may mean that it reaches smaller pockets of the population, meaning lower ratings, but is that a reason not to fund it? The government seems to want to move to a free market, and there are many things that have already been lost because of that. For example, there is less culture in our country and fewer shows for young people. We are moving toward mass Americanization, and no one seems to care what will happen.

• (1700)

I would like to talk about a letter that a Montreal resident, Guylaine Bombardier, wrote to my colleague who moved this motion. I just love what she wrote. She said that, as a francophone citizen of Quebec, she truly believed that, without CBC, the health of our democracy and our culture would not be the same. She added that, despite the many constraints associated with competition, which should not be a factor for a public service, CBC is doing a better job than any other broadcaster of helping her understand the society she lives in. She also said that the unreasonable cuts to CBC worry—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Time has run out.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

[English]

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been sitting here this afternoon listening carefully, and I almost thought for a few minutes that I was sitting in a funeral listening to a bunch of eulogies.

CBC is on the air as we speak. CBC will be on the air tomorrow. CBC will be on the air for decades to come. One of the reasons is that Canadian taxpayers are providing a subsidy to the CBC/Radio-

Canada of almost \$1 billion a year. That is a lot of money. That is because this government is committed to ensuring that the CBC continues to operate.

I ask the member to comment on a quote from Hubert Lacroix, who is the president of CBC, when he said:

When we consider all of that I think that the people who watch CBC-Radio-Canada will tell you very clearly that we discharge our mandate very well. If we judge by our ratings and the relevance we have in their eyes, it's spectacular. It has never been as high. Let's keep that in mind

I would like the member to comment on that.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

His analogy is very odd. I will respond with another analogy. When a person has a leg amputated, he can still walk, but with one heck of a limp. That is what is happening. That is what the government is doing.

Yes, CBC/Radio-Canada will keep operating, but it will have to make do with less. That is what we are saying. We are saying that the corporation needs stable, multi-year funding. That is what we are asking for. I wanted to reread my colleague's motion, but I do not have it.

My colleague quoted Hubert Lacroix, who was appointed by the Conservatives. Monday morning, on the air, Mr. Lacroix referred to my colleague as “the infamous Pierre Nantel”. He had a particular way of talking about my colleague that made me wonder whether he might actually be quite partisan. I am sorry, but I will not base my opinion of the CBC on Mr. Lacroix.

• (1705)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): As you know, referring to another MP by name in the House is not allowed.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Saint-Lambert.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I would say that this is a death knell. It is clear that when funding is cut, when our public broadcaster does not have the room to be as eclectic as possible, to reach as broad a range of television viewers as possible and connect with the public, then the public broadcaster is in trouble. That is the position the Conservatives are putting the broadcaster in. When budgets are cut then there will obviously be a negative impact.

That being said, a public broadcaster has its purpose. It is the primary and central tool of the public. The Conservatives are losing sight of that, as they have done with other crown corporations. We see that they are at it again with our public broadcaster and that is not right. This also has adverse effects on our democracy.

Can my colleague share her thoughts on this?

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question. I have not yet had the chance to talk about this.

Business of Supply

Since we arrived here, we have seen this government constantly attack public services and crown corporations, such as VIA Rail and Canada Post. We saw the cuts that were made at Canada Post and more cuts are being made. This is a slow march to privatization. The last big wave of privatization came from Mr. Mulroney, who privatized 23 crown corporations during the 10 years he was in power. I wonder whether our Prime Minister thought to himself that he does not have a lot of time left and that he has to redouble his efforts during his final year. I think this is unfortunate.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We will resume debate, but I will let the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville know that there are approximately seven minutes remaining in the time permitted for debate on the question this afternoon, so I will give him the normal signal as we get close to that time.

The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the guidance on the amount of time that is left. I do appreciate it. I will say a few things and then there might be an opportunity for questions and comments. I will play it by ear, depending on how animated I get in the discussion today.

I am kind of disappointed in the opposition parties today. One of the reasons I am disappointed is that there is a responsibility to remember that we live in the 21st century, not 1950. I heard a lot of opposition members refer to television shows that families watched back in 1950 and 1960, but the last time I looked at my calendar, it was 2014.

The world in broadcasting radio and TV has dramatically changed. A few members on this side of the House know quite a bit about that, and they have spoken very eloquently about the fact that our radio and television system has dramatically changed.

We have hundreds of channels that people can watch on their TVs. Canadians are choosing what they want to watch in many different ways and for many different reasons. We have excellent coverage of services throughout all of Canada, including northern and rural parts of Canada, which even a few years ago did not have great services. Many of those communities have excellent services today, with a lot of options.

However, we are talking specifically about the CBC/Radio-Canada today. It is an organization of which I am proud and it has been strongly supported by this government since we came into office in 2006. In fact, we recognize the excellent contributions the CBC, as our national public broadcaster, makes in Canadian society. We know that some remote aboriginal and official language minority communities rely on the CBC for their main way of having television and radio communicated to them. We respect that and we have continued to support that as a government.

The CBC is mandated to inform, enlighten, and entertain Canadian audiences and to offer distinctively Canadian programming that contributes to the exchange and flow of cultural expression. That programming is expected to reflect Canada and all its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the needs of the regions.

The CBC must strive to produce the programming that is of equal quality in English and French, as well as reflect the different needs of official language communities and English and French linguistic minorities. As well, CBC/Radio-Canada is mandated to reflect the multicultural and multinational nature of Canada while contributing to a shared consciousness and identity.

The Broadcasting Act guarantees the CBC a degree of independence freedom as an arm's-length Crown corporation. This guarantee is based on the significance and importance of journalistic freedom in our democracy. Our government continues to work with the CBC in a manner that respects these independence principles and allows it to fulfill its cultural mandate.

The recent situation at the CBC is due to business decisions made by the corporation. It receives substantial funding to meet its mandate under the Broadcasting Act, and it is up to the CBC to provide programming in French and English that Canadians want. The choices in programs and services are made independently from government involvement.

Each year we provide financial support to the CBC totalling more than \$1 billion to deliver on its mandate and its core services. It is an incredibly significant amount of federal funding. In fact, it is the most funding that we provide to any federal cultural or heritage crown corporation.

● (1710)

CBC/Radio-Canada is facing the same challenges as many other broadcasters: fragmentation of audiences, new content consumption methods, increased competition, and the list goes on. All broadcasters are striving to adapt to this constantly changing new reality. Large groups are being formed, new strategies are being tested, and broadcasters are looking for new ways to keep audiences. CBC/Radio-Canada is no exception, and must produce programming that Canadians actually want to watch.

With respect to the opposition motion, it does fly in the face of some of the experts who have commented on the current status.

Alex Levasseur, president of the Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada, said that any eventual cuts will not be the result of a federal action.

France Belisle, who is the director of communications and public relations for CBC/Radio-Canada, said:

[*Translation*]

The problem is the advertising market, which is in decline.

[*English*]

These are realities that the CBC, like other broadcasters throughout North America and the world, is now facing. These are decisions that need to be made to ensure the long-term viability of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

I believe I will be the last speaker on this topic, so before I sit down I just want to reiterate that all families in Canada cherish the CBC. We each have individual programs and services that we enjoy. To make sure that the CBC continues to be viable for the long term, there are structural changes and decisions that it will have to make, but this government stands with the CBC. We stand with public support in financing the CBC, and we wish the CBC 100 more years of success in this great country of Canada.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

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

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.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, the NDP would like the division to be deferred until Monday, May 26, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Accordingly the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, May 26, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

[*English*]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock as 5:30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

MARINE MAMMAL REGULATIONS

The House resumed from March 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-555, An Act respecting the Marine Mammal Regulations

Private Members' Business

(seal fishery observation licence), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Manicouagan has five minutes to finish his comments. The hon. member for Manicouagan.

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up where I left off a few months ago. If memory serves me correctly, my speech was about the Marine Mammal Regulations.

I was talking about genealogy and etymology when I concluded my previous speech on this topic. I am often told that my speeches are not altogether relevant. However, I would say that I transpose reality and provide some insight into comparative law, which means transposing one reality onto another riding or, often, another country.

In this case, we are talking about the ethics of hunting and fishing marine mammals. I felt it was important to put this into context, from the point of view of aboriginal nations and taking into account the realities in the communities, on reserve and in remote communities. I was talking about etymology because I mentioned my cousin Atshuk, who is actually a distant cousin. *Atshuk* means "seal".

The fact that a person could have a name that also refers to a marine mammal demonstrates just how relevant that etymology is. It also highlights the close relationship that exists between aboriginal peoples and, in this case, marine mammals.

As I said last time, according to the oral tradition and the information that was brought to my attention, the Innu of Uashat were not necessarily hunters or sealers, but this has been part of a healthy and balanced diet for several centuries.

I mentioned all this to reinforce the fact that the most ethical methods of killing the animal for human consumption are those used by the first nations. It only stands to reason considering it took 10,000 or 20,000 years of trial and error to get to this point. We can all agree that after occupying a land for 10,000 years we have better knowledge of how to slaughter an animal ethically. The simple fact of naming one's children after a marine animal is a testament to the respect for and importance of that marine animal in the oral tradition, and also in the community's own social structure.

I know that the bill before us deals with seal fishery observation licences. Incidentally, the head of the Canadian Sealers Association said that groups and protesters come too close and interfere with sealers' activities. He added that sealers have powerful boats and weapons, and that groups and protesters try to interfere by resorting to dangerous manoeuvres.

Private Members' Business

Therefore, I understand that this bill seeks, by virtue of a written document, to put some distance between observers and the marine mammals. However, as I said during my last speech on this issue, a certain proximity exists, particularly on the ice. I am thinking about my father. In his house, which directly faces the St. Lawrence River, he can see seals in the morning. If he wants to, he can go on the ice and meet them, which is not really recommended. This is why he does not do so but, from a strictly practical point of view, it would be possible, given the proximity, the prevalence and the overabundance of this resource.

It is somewhat deplorable to consider seals as a resource, but there are too many of them right now and this is a real issue. It is quite something to see seals on a daily basis during the winter. We can see the *atshuk* at a certain distance. We can even see white coats. That is why it is necessary to support this special relationship and the methods that were developed over tens of thousands years by aboriginal people to kill the animal quickly. This expeditious method may sometime seem to belong to another era, especially to foreigners, to people from across the Atlantic Ocean, or to Europeans. However, I rely on knowledge and oral traditions to judge the ethical and expeditious nature of the techniques used.

• (1720)

In this regard, I wish to point out that the NDP unequivocally supports humane and sustainable seal fishery and, consequently, an eventual return to traditional practices or, at the very least, an in-depth study and real attention to ancestral practices that are expeditious, but that also spare the animal unnecessary suffering.

This reasoning can be applied to many other issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The member's time is up.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Malpeque.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to speak to this motion, and I am in support of it. To be clear, the enactment of this act would require the Governor in Council to amend the marine mammal regulations to increase the distance that a person must maintain from another person who is fishing for seals from a half nautical mile to a full nautical mile, except under the authority of a seal fishery observation licence.

As I have said, the Liberal Party of Canada fully supports the Canadian seal hunt and the sealing industry, and we do place a high priority on the safety and well-being of all those who are involved in the seal hunt. What this motion really gets at is that this is a safety issue. Anti-sealing protestors have become more aggressive in recent years, and these activities that they are involved in not only endanger the lives of sealers trying to earn a living in a very tough and difficult fishery and in a way that is traditional to a lot of areas in this country but they also endanger their own lives.

My experience on this issue and the seal hunt and the fishery goes back some time. In fact, I was involved in a fisheries committee that did a study on a sustainable seal herd and the fishery in 1999. I can remember then fighting or arguing and debating with some of the anti-seal hunt people.

At that time in 1999, the anti-seal hunt folks would use that little white seal pup that is awfully endearing, a beautiful little animal. I remember vividly that they were using the white seal pup in the advertising for the anti-seal hunt, and it had been killed brutally, or they claimed it was being killed brutally. It was illegal at that time to kill white seal pups and it still is. Those are not the animals that are being slaughtered, if they want to say, or harvested, which would be a better word. However, what some of those anti-sealing folks were doing at the time, and still are, is using the advertisement of the white seal pup in their anti-sealing profession and spreading falsehoods in Europe and a lot of other places around the world. They are using it as a way to finance their organization, of which about 70% of the money goes to administration. It is quite a job creation program, and the result of that job creation program, by which they have convinced some Europeans to not buy seal products and to be anti-seal hunt, is that it is taking away jobs and opportunities for Canadians whose traditional fishery was the seal hunt.

When that report was written, the sustainable seal population of the harp seal herd was two million. Information provided by Fisheries and Oceans recently indicates that the northwest Atlantic harp seal population now is nearly ten million, up from that two million in the 1970s.

• (1725)

Imagine how much cod 10 million harp seals eat. That was a fact in the 1999 report.

I want to read a couple of sections of that report. Under the heading "Predation by Seals and the Impact on Cod", it states:

One of the most controversial aspects of the debate on seals is whether predation by harp seals is impeding the recovery of cod stocks. None of the witnesses who appeared before the Committee claimed that seals were the cause of the collapse of cod stocks, which they clearly attributed to both foreign and domestic overfishing. However, it was noted by the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council in their April 1999 report "that the single cod stock in the Northwest Atlantic considered recovered, namely, the southern Newfoundland/St-Pierre Bank stock (3Ps cod), is the only stock that does not have a large number of seals occurring within its stock range."

What it is saying is that seals do have an impact on cod stock.

The report goes on to specifically indicate how serious that impact on cod stock is:

According to DFO information, an average adult harp seal consumes between 1.0 and 1.4 tonnes of food a year. DFO estimates that the proportion of commercial species, particularly cod, is about 1 to 2%.

This figure is low because of the lack of data.

When we are talking about the seal hunt and cod and the anti-sealers, which the motion is trying to move further away from the seal herd itself, part of the problem is that little white seal pup, which is a lot more cuddly than a codfish. We do not see those anti-sealing folks out there saying, "My golly, these seals should not be eating all these beautiful little codfish". I would accuse them directly. They used that little white seal pup. They still use that little white seal pup. It is not legal to slaughter that pup, but they are using it for fundraising purposes and are creating consequences in the lives of people involved in the seal industry.

Private Members' Business

To put it bluntly, the Canadian seal hunt is a humane and sustainable practice that provides jobs and food. It is also a traditional way of life for many people in Atlantic Canada, coastal communities in Quebec, and the northern regions of the Inuit.

• (1730)

While I support the motion, I believe that the government could have done more to protect the Canadian sealing industry, especially by trying to insert something into CETA, the Canada-European trade agreement, to prevent the Europeans from taking the measures they have taken against the Canadian seal hunt.

I do not want to spend a lot of time on that, but the bottom line in terms of the motion is whether it is really a safety measure.

I have outlined a number of areas where anti-sealers are using misinformation to promote their cause. They are using it to create jobs and income for themselves. They will go to any length to promote their cause and use misinformation to do so. All this motion would do is move those demonstrators a little further back from the seal herd.

I congratulate the member for West Nova for introducing the motion. It would put in place regulations that would ensure the safety of both those involved in the seal hunt and the protesters themselves.

• (1735)

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, part of being a team is that when one part of the team drops the ball, the other part of the team picks it up and runs into the end zone.

I really want to thank the member for West Nova for picking the ball up on this piece of legislation. I had originally introduced this legislation prior to the last election, before becoming a parliamentary secretary. As members know, parliamentary secretaries cannot introduce private members' legislation.

The member for West Nova, very ably, was able to pick up this legislation and bring it to the House of Commons. Hopefully it will gain the support of all members of the House and go through. It is a very needed piece of legislation.

I do welcome the opportunity to speak in favour of Bill C-555, an act respecting the marine mammal regulations, seal fishery observation licence. The proposed amendments will make the annual seal harvest safer for all concerned. Before highlighting the specifics, however, let me put the safety issues into a larger context.

It is no secret that Canada's seal harvest has drawn the ire of many celebrities over the years. Many B-list and failed actors and actresses have used the seal hunt to try to promote their own careers because they glean some public interest in the issue. I think that is false. I think it is shameful.

They are often the ones who say they support the downtrodden and poor people across the planet. They go on television and say how much they do to support charities. In fact, what they are doing is promoting their own careers at the expense of those who are truly in need, the average sealers and their families who need the seal hunt to provide sustenance and a small amount of money to help make ends meet at the end of the month. Those are the people who are being

hurt by these B-list, washed-up actors and actresses who protest the seal hunt.

Members may recall in 2006 when Paul McCartney and his then-wife, Heather Mills, who is a very rich lady now, because she divorced him and took half his money, apparently, appeared on an ice floe in the Gulf of St. Lawrence for a photo op. The seal clearly did not want to play ball with Sir Paul and snapped at the couple. A photograph later appeared in the *Sun* newspaper in Britain under a headline, "A Hard Day's Bite".

I wish that seal had had longer teeth, quite frankly. Sir Paul McCartney has not been seen on an ice floe since that unfortunate incident. That photo op gone wrong actually performed a valuable public service. It showed the world that seals are not the cuddly creatures they are often made out to be by the media and by these protestors, but rather wild animals in the same league as beavers and bears.

I am proud that Canada's seal harvest is biologically sustainable, well managed, and carried out humanely. It is an effective marriage of traditional knowledge and modern science, one that we are always ready to improve upon through new techniques and modern methods. Unfortunately, there are those who continue to malign Canada's good name on this issue. I am not only speaking of celebrity activists but also of our trading partners. As we approach the annual seal harvest, it is a good opportunity to remind these partners and our stakeholders that the Government of Canada supports this industry as it engages in this time-honoured tradition.

As members may recall, the European Union has banned the import and sale of seal products since 2010. This was an affront to Canadian sealers and injurious to Canada's coastal, Inuit, and other aboriginal communities, and the Government of Canada quickly challenged the ban through the WTO.

Last November, the dispute panel found that the European Union's import ban did, in fact, violate its international trade obligations. However, at the same time, that panel said the ban on seal products can be justified due to some of the public's concerns regarding the seal harvest, referring to propaganda released by the anti-sealing efforts. These findings show the anti-sealing lobby is having a drastic effect. Through emotionally exploitive images and misinformation about Canada's sealing practices, special interest groups are turning public opinion against the seal harvest, particularly in Europe. That is why the European Union argued that the seal ban was necessary to address so-called public morals.

Private Members' Business

The acceptance of public morality as a basis for discriminatory bans on seal products is not only of concern to Canada. The panel report undermines a rules-based global trading system that gives consumers the power to make their own purchasing decisions. Indeed, upholding a ban on seal products creates a dangerous precedent for global trade, but they did it anyway.

● (1740)

Of course, this government is appealing the panel's findings through the appellate body of the WTO. We will continue to defend our seal harvest as a humane, sustainable, and well-regulated industry, and confront any contrary views with cold, hard facts. In the short term, however, we recognize that the panel's findings will fuel all those who oppose the seal harvest so zealously.

This brings me back to the current legislation. Many special interest groups, critics, and celebrities are concerned with the management of the seal harvest. Their desire to monitor the harvest up close may involve unnecessary risk, however, and we must not wait for tragedy to occur before we act.

The bill before the House today seeks to reduce that risk. Under proposed attachments and amendments, no person, except under the authority of the seal fishery observation licence issued by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, could approach within one nautical mile of a person fishing for seals.

There would be those who would solve the problem of risk simply by making the seal harvest go away. That is not a practical solution, neither for Canadian sealers nor Canada's coastal, Inuit, or other aboriginal communities that depend on the seal harvest in so many ways. It is a question of respect for culture and a way of life that has continued for generations.

It is also a question of the revenue generated by coastal communities from the seal harvest. For example, each year the sales of meat and skin for garments and arts and crafts generate \$1 million for the Nunavut economy.

All that said, we are not debating the continued existence of the seal harvest. Instead, we are looking into how to address the increased risks that are posed by some individuals who observe without a licence. By requiring a few succinct changes to the Marine Mammal Regulations, Bill C-555 proposes an elegant and thoughtful solution to this challenge.

The Canadian sealing industry has evolved over the past several hundred years, or since the early 1700s, when the first organized occurrence of the annual hunt was actually documented. The seal hunt has been going on for well over 500 years and, according to the documented history of our first nations people, well before that.

Over the years, the nature and conditions of the hunt and of the vessels, tools, and methods used by sealers have evolved, and technology has improved. That said, this is not the first change to the Marine Mammal Regulations in recent years. Members may recall, for example, that the regulations were amended in 2009 to ensure more humane harvesting methods. Nor will it likely be the last change to these regulations. New challenges and risks arise that we cannot foresee, and hopefully future governments will act just as responsibly. To be clear, the intention is to preserve the authority and discretion of the Governor in Council to modify the regulations in

the future through normal regulatory processes, as opposed to having to do it by legislation.

Currently, the Marine Mammal Regulations permit anyone to observe the seal hunt from outside a half nautical mile of a seal harvester at work. That is about 900 metres or only 3,000 feet. It is not far enough. Should unauthorized observers violate the half nautical mile distance, our enforcement officials are left with relatively little time, usually in difficult environmental conditions in the sea, to react and intervene if necessary. Requiring unlicensed observers to stay farther away from the sealers who are doing their work would allow our enforcement officials additional time to intercept a vessel that breaches the distance and keep it from disrupting the harvest and possibly endangering the safety of the sealers, who are just trying to make an honest living.

That is why Bill C-555 proposes to double the safety barrier to one full nautical mile, which is about 1,800 metres or 6,000 feet. As I mentioned, this change would allow for more effective enforcement of the regulations in situations in which non-licensed observers deliberately set out to disrupt the hunt. The added distance would afford fishery officers the additional time they need to react to breaches of the one nautical mile limit and intervene safely and effectively, to prevent disruption of the hunt and to protect the sealers who may be put at risk, while maintaining the current regime in place for licensed observers who have followed the rules.

This may lead to fewer disruptions like the one that took place in 2008 involving the *Farley Mowat*, in which a vessel approached sealers engaged in the harvest and caused them to fear for their safety. The increased distance proposed in Bill C-555 would help to prevent these types of incidents and ultimately lead to a more orderly harvest.

● (1745)

In conclusion, the seal harvest remains a fixture of life in the coastal communities of Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the north. It is embedded in our culture and provides much needed income to strengthen the livelihoods in remote communities. This government stands behind all those sealers who are trying to make an honest living and maintain their quality of life.

I invite all hon. members in the House to please join me in supporting this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the bill introduced by my colleague for West Nova.

I will use my time to focus on the safety aspect of the seal hunt and the key role it plays in the socio-economic development of many Canadian communities where it is of vital economic and cultural importance.

Private Members' Business

Sealers are usually self-employed and work seasonally. They play an important role in managing the wildlife population in hunting areas to ensure the sustainability of the resource. Canada's seal hunt remains sustainable. The harp seal population is healthy and thriving. Having tripled in size since 1970, it is now estimated to be 6.9 million individuals.

In some aboriginal communities, the right to hunt and fish for seals is protected by the constitutional right to hunt marine mammals. I want to emphasize that fact because any planned or spontaneous act intended to disrupt the seal hunt would violate the constitutional right of these aboriginal communities, thereby disparaging their cultural heritage and identity, which are associated with the seal hunt.

As I said, Inuit communities truly consider the seal hunt as part of their cultural heritage and their daily life is shaped by this traditional activity, especially because it represents their main source of food.

Furthermore, although the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union have banned imports of seal products, there are exemptions to this ban for products derived from a traditional seal hunt by aboriginal peoples. Thus, despite this ban, if clothing were made by Inuit communities as part of their traditional activities, they could be sold and exported to Europe. Despite the ban, there is a certain openness and recognition of the traditional cultural value of this hunt for our communities. For that reason, the legislator is obliged to guarantee the continuity of this inalienable right of aboriginal peoples.

This regulatory bill will do more than preserve cultural heritage. It will ensure the safety of hunters, employees of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and observers in their workplace. By establishing a safe working environment, this bill will contribute to the creation of regulations that will prevent serious accidents resulting from protests that disrupt the orderly conduct of these activities.

The goal of this bill is not to prevent protests by people who are opposed to the seal hunt, but to ensure that if these people want to express their opinion they can do so without jeopardizing the safety of the hunters and workers for whom this is the main source of income.

I believe that it is essential that people be able to hunt when it is their livelihood. For that reason I urge members to pass this bill.

I would also like to add that the seal hunt makes a key contribution to the budget of many Canadian families. Preventing them from carrying out these activities deprives them of essential financial resources. It will lessen the economic prosperity of the communities that are dependent on the seal hunt.

Overall, the sealing industry provides up to 6,000 part-time jobs. Of course, I mean that they are full-time jobs, but they are seasonal, not really part-time. According to conservative estimates based on available data, the value of the seal hunt is \$35 million to \$40 million annually.

● (1750)

The seal hunt can represent 25% to 35% of a hunter's total annual income. This is a very significant boost to the economy of those

communities where economic opportunities are unfortunately often limited.

It is estimated that, in Newfoundland and Labrador, more than 5,000 people derive a substantial part of their income from the seal hunt. In a lot of cases, it accounts for more than 30% of their annual income. For hunters in the Magdalen Islands, 25% of their annual income comes from seal hunting.

My support for this bill takes into account the local realities of the communities that are economically dependent on the seal hunt. Ensuring that this activity goes on also contributes to the creation of a lot of indirect employment because of the many by-products of the seal hunt. I must point out that seals are not exclusively hunted for their fur. Seal oil is richer in omega-3 fatty acids than fish oils; it has been sold in capsule form, mainly in Europe, Asia and Canada, for 10 years. One particularly interesting fact is that researchers are looking at the possibility of using valves taken from harp seals in heart valve transplants in humans.

There is a company in my riding, Fourrures Grenier, that makes products like boots, mittens and other winter clothing using seal skin. Perhaps I am a bit biased, but they really are the warmest boots I have ever owned. They get me through our cold winters in Abitibi—Témiscamingue. Even though seal hunting is not an economic activity in our region, there are still local businesses that benefit from the industry. As well, because of the Internet, they can now sell their products almost anywhere in the world. They are no longer located just in our region and have expanded their business. Things are going well for them.

I would like to point out that the New Democrats unequivocally support a seal hunt that is sustainable and humane. Those really are the two essential words to remember in the NDP's position on this issue. When the hunt is sustainable and humane, we can only support it, given all the economic benefits it has for our communities.

We support any legislative measures that would strengthen the Criminal Code provisions on animal cruelty. For example, the NDP wants animals to have legal status and wants to make the Criminal Code provisions on animal cruelty and animal neglect more enforceable. I want to point out that seal hunters have a great deal of respect for seals. I have full confidence in the way the hunt is carried out in Canada. I am proud of how seal hunting and fishing are carried out in our communities.

The seal hunt creates economic opportunities for a number of communities, and it is our duty to ensure that we find a balance between maintaining the economic benefits associated with this activity and ensuring that it takes place in a sustainable manner.

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I will admit that I am a bit confused about whether we are supposed to refer to it as hunting or fishing. I think we can use both terms without any problem. If we want to encourage seal hunters or fishers and help them pursue their economic endeavours, we must ensure that they have a safe work environment. If we increase the distance that another person must maintain, we can allow hunters and fishers to do their job safely without violating the rights of people who want to protest. They will be able to continue to protest, but this will allow people to work and earn a good living.

• (1755)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate. Accordingly I invite the hon. member for West Nova for his right of reply. The hon. member has five minutes.

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking my colleagues from around the House for understanding the importance of this bill and showing their support for it. We know there are many industries in the world that are perhaps not universally supported, yet we recognize that different areas have different priorities in the different job-creating industries.

The seal hunt in Canada is an extremely important industry for certain parts of the country. That is why it is important we recognize it as a legitimate, long-standing, and now today a very humane and protected industry. It is one that supports a lot of communities and provides a lot of income to very important family circumstances, and it is one on which many people depend. The fact that it is done humanely and that it has got to be done safely is a concern of our government, of course.

Bill C-555 is a modest bill. I am sure there will be more adjustments down the road, but the real purpose in providing this larger, kilometre-wide area of protection is simply to ensure the safety of the seal hunters and those who observe the seal industry.

Those who do it legitimately and those who have concerns or questions, as long as they are registered, are fine. They have the right to express their opinion. However, there are those who would disrupt the industry, and it has happened before. What the bill says is not only to protect the sealers but the Coast Guard and the rescue and policing efforts as well. It has to be very clear that anybody who gets closer than that kilometre distance is in fact creating a serious danger to all concerned, and they will be dealt with accordingly.

I will not repeat the many very good points made by several members here. However, we have the obligation to ensure that legitimate industries and businesses and people engaged in legitimate activities deserve our full support and recognition. That is why this bill, in a modest way, moves to add to that protection and ensure the industry stays viable, stays sustainable, and stays an important part of our Canadian landscape and economic activity going forward.

I would like to thank everybody for their participation. I look forward to the bill passing.

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.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 28, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question I asked the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness on April 8 came about as a result of the Canadian Police Association meetings held in Ottawa in April. The question was straightforward. Given the concern raised by the CPA with respect to the costs of policing, one of the major drivers of those costs is that front-line police officers are asked increasingly to serve as substance abuse counsellors, mental health advisers, marriage counsellors, and youth intervention officers, while maintaining their primary responsibility for community safety.

One of the major elements of this ever-growing list of responsibilities is that more and more often, front-line police officers are having to deal with individuals suffering from serious mental health issues.

In response, the minister stated that better services can be provided and claimed the government was doing just that by “improving the efficiency of our police services”.

One has to wonder if the minister understood the question.

If that is the case, the minister was paying no attention whatsoever to those who testified before the public safety committee on one of the most significant cost drivers for police services and one of the most inefficient uses of police resources—namely, police responding to calls whose origin is a mental health problem.

After listening to those concerns, in the most recent report of the public safety committee on the economics of police I proposed the following recommendation:

That the federal government through Public Safety and Emergency Planning and Health Canada develop a National Mental Health Strategy that would address the critical issue of downloading of certain responsibilities onto policing services.

Adjournment Proceedings

The recommendation goes on to explain how these mental health issues could be better addressed and calls for this national initiative to be undertaken in co-operation with provincial, territorial, and municipal representatives.

The recommendation calls for the release of a white paper on mental health issues. Such a white paper should contain a comprehensive analysis of the issues and the response of governments to this health care crisis.

Moreover, it should focus on the relationship between policing and the increasing incidence of law enforcement officials serving as the first—and, in some cases, the only—contact between society and those suffering from mental health issues, addiction problems, and homelessness.

Finally, the resolution would establish a process to follow a set of timelines. The white paper should be released by December 31 of this year; cross-country consultations should be held and concluded by June 30, 2015; and the national strategy should be ready for completion and implementation by December 31, 2015.

My question remains: is the current government prepared to work with the provinces, territories, and police services across the country to develop a comprehensive national strategy on how to respond to a growing mental health crisis that is causing a lot of difficulty in terms of police forces and their ability to respond?

• (1800)

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, it is important to recognize that policing is primarily a matter of provincial jurisdiction. However, at the federal level, we can play a leadership role in terms of ensuring that provinces are using the best practices to keep streets and communities safe.

Our government recognizes that policing in this country is changing. Crime, and thereby police work, has become diverse and complex in nature. Police are increasingly called upon to deal with non-criminal public order incidents related to mental health and addiction issues. Let us not forget that police are also dealing with significant and time-consuming new crimes and challenges, such as cyber, organized, and financial crimes, child sexual exploitation, terrorism, and large-scale gatherings and protests.

At a time when many jurisdictions are facing significant fiscal challenges, we are at a crossroads where we have the opportunity to take a hard look at how we are doing things and how our policing services can continue to improve. That is why our government is working with municipalities, provinces, territories, the RCMP, and other stakeholders to help address the many challenges facing our police services.

As part of the economics of policing initiative, our government brought the shared forward agenda to federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for justice and public safety as a collective first step in shaping the future of policing in Canada. Collectively, we have taken actions to increase operational and structural efficiency and effectiveness within police services. We are investing in proactive, integrated community safety approaches to get at the roots of crime.

Since the first summit on the economics of policing in January 2013, we have made concrete progress in several areas.

We launched the index of policing initiatives to encourage information sharing and communication among police services and governments across Canada.

Last fall in P.E.I., Public Safety Canada co-hosted a summit to discuss and identify how best to deliver high-quality policy training in the most effective and efficient manner.

We have also invested in a number of projects that focus on developing a national policing research agenda and establishing a police research network. This will focus police research in this country and provide police services and policing partners with the evidence-based research they require to make informed decisions on operational and administrative policing issues and reforms.

Our government is actively seeking out innovative approaches and new partnerships to better deliver policing in this country. We are already seeing some great examples of innovation in practice.

The Community Mobilization Prince Albert Project, also referred to as the HUB, is a multi-agency team focused on crime prevention. This model is now being tested elsewhere, including in Toronto neighbourhoods.

The Association for Safer Cape Breton Communities is a community-driven organization that is working to establish community offices and other crime-reduction initiatives and to encourage involvement among residents.

Meeting our goals under the economics of policing initiative will not be easy, nor will it be quick. This multi-jurisdictional approach is critical, and we are fortunate to have a strong relationship in place with other governments and police stakeholders.

Canadians can be assured that we will continue to provide police with the tools they need to do their jobs and keep all Canadians safe. That is why we have passed over 30 justice and public safety initiatives to keep criminals behind bars where they belong. Unfortunately, the opposition parties, the Liberals and NDP, including the member for Malpeque, have consistently opposed these measures.

• (1805)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, it is typical the way the parliamentary secretary started off, and finished, of course, blaming the opposition. First, she said it was primarily a provincial responsibility, and that is typical of the Conservative government. Either blame somebody else or transfer the responsibility rather than provide leadership.

Adjournment Proceedings

What my question and comments really did here tonight is confirm what is needed, which is a national mental health strategy for Canada with set timeframes on how to get there, a white paper, consultations held on the white paper, and then implement a plan by 2015. Imagine the results of that. Imagine better use of police resources in terms of being first responders, and better use of their time so they can spend it where it should be spent. Imagine the economic, social, and productivity potential for those who are afflicted with mental health issues.

It is possible. All that is required is federal leadership, and that is what we are missing at the moment.

Ms. Roxanne James: Mr. Speaker, it is quite the contrary. Our government has taken a leadership role on the economics of policing. However, we all can and must play a part in keeping Canada's police services efficient and effective.

Bringing together the key policing stakeholders to work on the economics of policing has demonstrated that we all share a strong interest and commitment to sustaining high quality policing services across Canada. We are focused on innovation and partnerships, and working collaboratively to enhance policing and public safety overall.

Federal, provincial and territorial ministers have committed to developing and implementing initiatives under the Shared Forward Agenda, with a focus on efficiency and effectiveness in police services, new models of community safety and efficiencies within our criminal justice system.

Canadians know that we will succeed in continuing to build a sustainable and modern police model capable of addressing current and future challenges, one that responds to the high expectations of all Canadians.

• (1810)

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about the Quebec Bridge and why it must be maintained.

A bridge that links two public roads is an infrastructure used by the public. It is used every day. More than 35,000 vehicles cross this bridge each day. Some people walk across the bridge, others take the train.

In the beginning, this bridge was built to allow trains to cross from the south shore to the north shore and vice versa. It was the last transcontinental link to be built. The federal government retained ownership of the Quebec Bridge for 75 years, from 1918 to 1993.

As for CN, which was a crown corporation at the time, it has been responsible for maintaining the bridge since 1923. The relationship between CN and the Quebec Bridge has lasted for more than 90 years. It is extraordinary and rare to see that in our country.

The Quebec Bridge is more than just a bridge. It is a postcard image for the Quebec City region. I do not know whether members are aware of this, but the bridge will soon celebrate its 100th

anniversary in the very same year that Canada celebrates its 150th anniversary. This infrastructure has a long history.

Moreover, it was built using a technique that is no longer in use. It is a cantilever bridge. It is and it will forever remain the world's longest cantilever bridge. That is certain. On May 23, 1987, the bridge was declared an international historic civil engineering monument by Canadian and American engineers. That is quite something.

However, since the 1980s, we have only seen cuts to the bridge's budget and maintenance. The structure had been carefully maintained from the 1920s to the 1980s, but that is no longer the case. Rust is beginning to appear. If we stop maintaining the bridge, or if we begin to slack off, we lose control, and that is exactly what is happening. On November 22, 2005, the former auditor general was already saying that something should be done.

Who would buy a car with no paint on it, even if we were told that it is nice, well built, and safe? Would anyone buy that car?

Here is my question for the government: is paint strictly a cosmetic and heritage issue?

[English]

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's interest in infrastructure in the Quebec City area. I can assure him that this Conservative government is very strongly committed to renewing infrastructure not only in Quebec but across the country.

In budget 2013, we announced the new Building Canada plan, a renewed commitment for infrastructure in this country: \$53 billion in infrastructure funding over the next decade. This is the longest and largest infrastructure plan in Canada's history, with record investments in infrastructure.

One of the very powerful aspects of the way the program works is that municipalities and provinces are in a position to identify and determine the infrastructure priorities in their specific communities. Municipalities across Quebec and across our great country know that they can rely on this federal government for strong, stable infrastructure funding over the next decade.

The new Building Canada plan is open for business. At the end of March, the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs announced the eligibility criteria for the new program. All the information about the new Building Canada fund is on the Infrastructure Canada website at www.infrastructure.gc.ca.

In many cases, municipalities are already identifying their infrastructure project priorities. Once they do that, they have a discussion with the respective province. The province then needs to deem a specific project a priority before it is considered under the provincial and territorial infrastructure component of the new Building Canada fund. Just this one component is \$10 billion of infrastructure commitment over the next decade, of which 10% is for small communities. There is a small-communities fund of dedicated funding for communities across the country of 100,000 residents or less.

Adjournment Proceedings

We look forward to working with our partners, the municipalities and provinces across this great country, to renew our infrastructure, to enhance the quality of life for Canadians, and to ensure that as a result of this renewed infrastructure, jobs will be created as well.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities did not answer the question as to whether he would buy a car with no paint on it.

I want to mention something that happened in 2005. The then future and now current Prime Minister came to Quebec City and mocked the Liberals by saying that the then Minister of Transport could not even paint a bridge.

Five Conservative transport ministers later—indeed, there have been five since his government was elected—not one has applied a coat of paint to the bridge.

The parliamentary secretary talked about infrastructure programs. In conclusion, the thing to do for taxpayers is to resume maintenance work at the earliest opportunity, because the longer we wait, the higher the costs will be for everyone. It will be good for the economy, because the Quebec City region will be able to rely on that infrastructure. It will be good for Quebec City's image and for everyone.

We have an opportunity to avoid a second Champlain Bridge. I am asking the government to consider that.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, our Conservative government has a 10-year commitment for infrastructure across the country. That is stable, predictable funding. There are three major components of the funding. There is the community infrastructure component, which includes the gas tax fund. Under the gas tax fund, for example, recreational infrastructure is eligible. This is what our government has done with the gas tax fund. We have doubled it. We have made the gas tax fund permanent. Moving forward, the gas tax fund will be indexed at 2% a year. In addition, there is the provincial territorial infrastructure component with \$10 billion, of which 10% is dedicated specifically to smaller communities. Beyond that, there is \$4 billion set aside for projects of national significance.

The Conservative government is getting the job done with respect to renewing our infrastructure, enhancing the quality of life for Canadians, and creating jobs.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked a question in the House that pertained to the Enbridge gateway pipeline. I pointed out that indigenous peoples, the Kitimat community, and most British Columbians do not support this project, because of environmental concerns.

The Supreme Court of Canada requires the federal government itself, and not the proponent, to consult and accommodate first nations' interests, and that has not happened in a manner that is sufficient, according to the first nations who are to be consulted. This week the UN top advocate for the rights of indigenous people agreed

that the consultation had not happened and said he thought this project should probably not go forward. Mr. Anaya is highly respected and the global voice on indigenous people's rights.

Last weekend I attended a rally of literally thousands of people in Vancouver who came out because of their concern that the government might approve this project. Why would they be concerned when the overwhelming volume of voices are against this in British Columbia? It is because of the actions of the government itself. The former natural resources minister came out demonizing the very people who were engaged in trying to make sure there is a balance that protects our environment, calling them radicals. It is also because the government erased much of the environmental regulatory framework that protects our environment in order to grease the skids for this project. Therefore, it is not surprising that people are very concerned that the government is not listening to the communities.

As the Liberal Party leader recently said at a Board of Trade meeting, governments can grant permits but only communities can grant permission, and certainly the first nations communities are not granting permission to the northern gateway pipeline.

Kitimat is the town that stands to gain some full-time jobs from this project. The initial estimate by Enbridge was that 40 full-time jobs would come out of this project. It has upped that number to 250. However, this town where those jobs would actually take place had a referendum on the subject, and it was turned down. Why? It was because the risks outweigh the benefits for British Columbians.

In 2010, I tabled a bill that would prevent oil tanker traffic in the waters around Haida Gwaii, which is a sensitive ecological area. Those are the very waters that are vulnerable to an oil spill risk if this project were to go ahead.

I am asking if the government will finally listen to these collective voices and reject this pipeline.

• (1820)

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to set the record straight for the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra regarding the proposed infrastructure projects and our government's efforts to ensure that aboriginal peoples are full partners in the development of Canada's natural resources.

This is a critical time for our natural resources sector. Across Canada, hundreds of major projects are planned within the next decade, or are under way, to the tune of approximately \$650 billion in new investment. They mean hundreds of thousands of jobs for Canadians, jobs in every sector of our economy and every corner of our country, but to achieve this potential, two things are essential.

First, our resources must be transported safely to market. Second, these projects must benefit aboriginal peoples in Canada and respect their treaty rights.

As hon. members know, energy infrastructure projects proposed by private business are rigorously reviewed by the independent National Energy Board. Our government's role and responsibility is clear: regulation and enforcement of pipelines to ensure that they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

Adjournment Proceedings

Questions pertaining to moving forward with specific proposals to construct energy infrastructure should be directed to private sector proponents.

For many aboriginal peoples, this is a particularly important opportunity. Many are located close to future energy projects offering the prospect of immense benefits for their communities.

First nations have, and will continue to make, important contributions as full partners in the development of our natural resources. In fact, the natural resources sector is the largest private employer of first nations people in Canada. We understand that the success of our energy sector depends on the full participation of aboriginal peoples, from environmental stewardship to the economic benefits of responsible resource development.

Last year our government appointed Douglas Eyford as the Special Federal Representative on West Coast Energy Infrastructure. He made a series of recommendations on the importance of engaging aboriginal peoples in the safety of our pipeline system and on protecting our environment. We are moving forward based on the Eyford report.

Our government recognizes the importance of incorporating aboriginal expertise, which is why we are moving forward with ways to enable aboriginal peoples to fully participate in the development and operation of our world-class tanker and pipeline safety systems.

With the participation of aboriginal communities and our commitment to world-class safety systems, we are confident that Canada can capture the tremendous economic promise before it. We can diversify our energy markets and ensure prosperity for all Canadians for generations to come.

• (1825)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, on the member's remarks about the full participation of aboriginal peoples, she is forgetting the fact that aboriginal peoples wanting to speak up about this project were tarred with insults by a member of the Governor in Council and insulted needlessly.

In fact, there are people in British Columbia who believe that there are some things money cannot buy. They are very concerned about

the risk of a major oil spill affecting our oceans and our communities and a sustainable economy. B.C.'s growing fisheries and tourism sectors would be at risk.

First nations, the Union of B.C. Municipalities, and the thousands of businesses whose growth and sustainability depend on a healthy ocean and coastal ecosystem and a healthy land ecosystem are united in their call for this project not to go ahead.

The government has changed its tactics from trying to ram it through overtly to trying to push it through covertly. Canadian and British Columbia communities and especially first nations, all of the first nations in the coastal area that could be affected by a major spill, such as the one from the *Exxon Valdez*, are going to keep making their voices heard, and I hope the government eventually will listen.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, Canada needs safe and reliable transportation infrastructure, including pipelines to ensure our products reach buyers in Asia, the United States, and around the world. Proposed oil pipeline projects in Canada that could go south, west, and east would help our country achieve its goal of supplying safe and responsible energy to the world.

New opportunities for Canada in global markets mean new opportunities for aboriginal peoples in developing our natural resources. Aboriginal people must be full partners in everything we do, from ensuring the safety of our pipeline system to protecting our marine environment from incidents to sharing in the benefits of developing our resources.

Once we have fully implemented our tanker and pipeline safety systems, with the involvement of aboriginal communities, Canada's world-class system will be among the safest in the world. This will pave the way for a brand new era of growth and prosperity for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:29 p.m.)

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