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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 29, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 29, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

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 nine petitions.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian section of ParlAmericas respecting its participation in a bilateral visit to Lima and Trujillo in Peru on March 28 to April 5, 2014.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in relation to its study of the main estimates for the fiscal year 2014-15.

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[*Translation*]

HEALTH COMMISSIONER OF CANADA ACT

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-604, An Act to establish the position of Health Commissioner of Canada and to amend certain Acts.

He said: Mr. Speaker, in October 2012, after an eight-week delay caused by administrative backlogs at Health Canada, a resident of Kamouraska who was suffering from a rare form of cancer received

permission to use a medication that would have reduced her suffering. It took another two weeks of relentless pressure from both me and Quebec media before anything happened. Unfortunately, the woman died before she was able to receive a single dose of the medication she was seeking.

I wanted answers about what had happened at Health Canada, but I was struck by a troubling reality. When Canadians feel that their public broadcaster is airing a poor-quality television show, for example, they can write to an ombudsman. If they are concerned about the protection of their personal information, a privacy commissioner can go as far as to investigate what happened, if need be. However, when Canadians see their health decline because of poor services or poor federal departmental or agency decisions, they have no ombudsman or commissioner they can turn to for help to shed light on what took place.

Therefore, today I am introducing a bill to establish the position of health commissioner of Canada. I hope that the House will pass this bill as soon as possible so that Canadians will never again have to live with the pain of being ill or see a loved one go through an illness without getting answers about what may have made their suffering worse.

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

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[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-605, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (protecting the Employment Insurance Operating Account).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand in the House today to introduce my bill on the protection of the employment insurance operating account. I want to thank my colleague, the member for Trois-Rivières, for seconding the motion. The bill essentially builds a fence around the account to protect the premiums paid into the EI account by workers and employers. It safeguards the account so that contributions can only be used for the purposes of the Employment Insurance Act. Why is that important? It is important because Liberal and Conservative governments have taken off with \$57 billion of contributions made by workers and businesses to ensure that the fund was there when workers were unemployed and needed it. It has been desperately painful.

Routine Proceedings

As a result of changes that the Liberals and the Conservatives have made to employment insurance, the use and eligibility has now dropped to an all-time low under the current government, whereby only 37% of EI applicants are eligible for benefits. I am pleased to be able to introduce the bill. I believe it will go some considerable distance to show workers and employers that this place has some faith in their ability to make sure that the fund is there when workers need it.

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

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[Translation]

INTEREST ACT

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-606, An Act to amend the Interest Act (prepayment charge).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce in the House of Commons today a bill governing penalties charged by banks when a consumer prepays the full amount of a mortgage. I would like to say that this bill is being seconded by the member for Sudbury.

The purpose of this bill is to limit mortgage prepayment penalties to three months' worth of interest and to prohibit banks from charging penalties if the prepayment is made as a result of the sale of a dwelling following a workplace relocation, serious illness or death, separation or job loss. Currently, consumers are at the mercy of banks, which do their utmost to maximize prepayment charges. These charges can exceed \$30,000. Members may recall that, this winter, the NDP launched a major campaign to make life more affordable for Canadians. We made numerous suggestions aimed at protecting consumers from being exploited by banks, credit card issuers and telecommunications corporations. This bill is part of that agenda.

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

* * *

•(1010)

[English]

OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 4, 2014, the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole in order to welcome Olympic and Paralympic athletes; that the Speaker be permitted to preside over the Committee of the Whole and make welcoming remarks on behalf of the House; and, when the proceedings of the Committee have concluded or at approximately 2:15 p.m., the Committee shall rise and the House shall resume its business as though it were 2:00 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Ottawa Centre because I believe that his contribution to this debate will be enlightening.

It is always an honour for me to rise in the House to debate the report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development concerning the Organization of American States.

I am pleased to do so because I believe that over the past few years in particular, Canada's reputation has lost some of its lustre, and our country's leadership and influence on the international scene are not what they once were.

I believe that it is important to debate this committee's report, which was tabled and concurred in unanimously by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

I note that the government's response to the committee indicates that the government accepts most of the recommendations. It is important to point that out. I will come back to one of the recommendations that the government supports in principle only, because it is important to talk about human rights in the House and about human rights in other countries.

When we are members of the United Nations, the United Nations charter requires that we respect human rights, everyone's rights. Therefore, when we negotiate free trade agreements with other countries—and in this case with Latin American countries—it is essential that we ensure that these countries' human rights standards are aligned with our own human rights, labour and environmental standards. It is vital that we understand this.

In fact, that is why on this side of the House we always find it difficult to accept free trade agreements that do not meet these conditions, which are vital and fundamental in my opinion.

Before arriving in this august chamber in 2011, I was long involved in international multilateral processes. For more than 23 years, I took part in the process that led to the UN General Assembly adopting the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Around the world, 370,000 million indigenous people now have a declaration that specifically, and in particular, addresses their most fundamental rights. It is the fruit of 23 years of work at the United Nations and I am very proud of that.

Routine Proceedings

I mention this experience with the multilateral negotiations that led to the declaration because for a few years now the Organization of American States has had a similar process for adopting an American declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

A few days after the Conservative government was elected in 2006, diplomats who were part of the Canadian delegation at the United Nations told us that their instructions for the negotiations on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples had changed.

●(1015)

Canada's participation in these negotiations used to be quite positive, but in 2006 it changed its position on the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples. That is unfortunate because this goes against Canada's international obligations and against the Charter of the United Nations, an organization of which Canada is a member. It is important to point that out.

There is another aspect that is essential to this morning's debate on the report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs. I think the government supports most of the recommendations that we made in this report and that is good.

Under recommendation 2 f, the committee proposes that Canada should support reforms that:

ensure that all reasonable OAS activities related to the promotion and protection of democratic governance and human rights are fully, consistently and predictably funded.

Canada supports this recommendation in principle. I wonder why it only supports this recommendation in principle when the recommendation seeks to standardize existing conventions on human rights and governance.

Many of the rulings rendered by the Supreme Court in recent years talk about good governance in relation to many of our country's institutions. I think that this is one of the most important things for us as a democratic country. We need to continue to insist that the authorities within any inter-American human rights system receive predictable financial support. I think it is unfortunate that the government did not go so far as to strongly support this recommendation. I think that is important to point out.

The fact that the Organization of American States is the only forum open to all independent states in the western hemisphere is another important reason to support it, as members no doubt know. In that sense, it is important to promote common norms and standards for all countries in the hemisphere. Once again, it is unfortunate that the government is not moving further in the direction of more stable and comprehensive funding for the authorities that exist within the Organization of American States.

We have once again the opportunity to demonstrate our leadership on the international stage. I think that we are missing many opportunities. For a few months now, we have been chairing the Arctic Council. This example came to mind because it is indicative of this government's attitude on the world stage. The Arctic Council brings together countries with an arctic space in their territory. We have been chairing the council for several months now. This is another opportunity where Canada could demonstrate its leadership. However, unfortunately, from the discussions and meetings I have

had with Inuit representatives of the northern regions of our country, we are once again failing in that regard.

That is why it is important to seriously consider the various reports tabled by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. I am proud to be a member of that committee because I believe that I am able to bring my international experience and my knowledge of international law to the table. That is why this report is important. This is another opportunity for us, as a country, to demonstrate that we understand the type of leadership we need to exert at the international level.

●(1020)

That is why I am delighted that the government is going to support our recommendations. We need to immediately take action to move in the right direction.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou for his excellent speech on the report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today, I would like to make a comment rather than ask a question.

My colleague talked quite a bit about this government's lack of leadership as chair of the Arctic Council. That also reminds me of the government's lack of leadership on the world stage, particularly in terms of Canada's withdrawal from the convention on desertification. I am not sure whether it is a convention or a protocol, so could my colleague elaborate on that? Furthermore, my constituents in Laval often talk about the Conservatives' withdrawal from the Kyoto protocol. Frankly, that has brought great shame on Canada.

What does my colleague think of this Conservative government's leadership on the world stage?

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Alfred-Pellan for her excellent and relevant question. It is always intriguing to look at the Conservative government's attitude on the world stage.

My colleague talked about Canada's withdrawal from the desertification protocol, but I could give another example that shows this government's lack of leadership internationally. Canada has a seat on the Human Rights Council, which is a major international body. That is where a very select group of some 30 UN members sit to ensure that human rights are respected and promoted.

However, the Government of Canada has lost its seat on the Human Rights Council. In addition, when the time came to run again, the government did not even bother, knowing all too well that the entire planet had understood perfectly that despite its obligations under the United Nations charter, this government does not even respect human rights in its own country. As an aboriginal person, I can say that this is often the case when it comes to Canada's first peoples.

●(1025)

Ms. Nicole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for the international work he has done and for the role he plays in the House to promote the first nations and his ancestors. It is very encouraging. He does everything he can to speak out against certain things and promote the causes that are close to his heart.

Routine Proceedings

Since we do not talk about it often, I would like to hear about his experience in negotiating treaties and have his take on the Canadian government at the time compared to today. This is very important. Could he share his views on the different roles and what role he played at the time?

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I am so blessed to have received these questions this morning.

Aboriginal peoples make up a significant part of the populations of various countries in the Americas, but they are often the most marginalized. They are often the most vulnerable peoples in the Americas. That is why reports like the one tabled by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development are very important for human rights. That is why I mentioned it.

Since my colleague has asked that I speak about my experience, I will say that there is one thing that everyone needs to understand or at least start to understand. There are some wonderful examples of agreements that have been negotiated in northern Quebec. People are now realizing from these experiences in northern Quebec that reaching agreements with the aboriginal peoples of this country is good not only for the environment, but also for the country's economy. That is what we must understand.

I am pleased that I was able to participate in various negotiation processes. I believe that the NDP is the only party that will be able to come to reasonable and respectful agreements with the first nations of Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to follow my colleague, because we worked together on this report, but also of note is the experience he has had on the international stage, and it was mentioned in his speech. I think we should acknowledge that. Certainly, we in our party are fortunate to have someone with his experience within our caucus. He has done such a great job leading Canada on the international stage, particularly on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. He was one of the many Canadians who were there to help negotiate that.

I say that because one of the key issues when it comes to the OAS and our relationship with Central America and South America, the Americas, that has been emerging is the importance of acknowledging the rights of indigenous peoples. This is fairly new; although not new in Canada. My colleague is an example of someone who has contributed to our country, but he has been able to contribute to other countries to say that, when it comes to minority groups in general, but particularly indigenous peoples, they are a precious resource that we need to acknowledge. In the case of countries like Colombia, for instance, there is a grave danger with respect to the elimination of peoples, not just their languages but actual populations. Therefore, it is important that we take a look at what Canada's role is within the Americas.

This report was to reflect on what Canada's role is within the Organization of American States. What is interesting about this report, and people will appreciate this, is that not often do all parties agree on reports. Often we have minority reports from the opposition. However, we all agreed to the recommendations in this report. That is an important point to make. We wanted to bring it to

the House today to take a look at what the committee recommended and where the government is at.

To start off, I want to talk a bit about what Canada has been doing in the past. This acknowledges some of the work the government and previous governments have been doing. There was funding through the OAS to help with different initiatives that are important to note. One of them is to strengthen national electoral systems and related processes. I do not have to tell members that right now there are concerns within South America with respect to elections and democratic development. The OAS is there to help with that. It is a multilateral organization that we fund to support the strengthening of national electoral systems. This is important when there are protests and concerns within certain member states within the OAS, where there are concerns from civil society and opposition parties as to whether or not governments are duly elected. Having that oversight is important. The strengthening of democratic development is important. Improving the standardization and harmonization of policies and frameworks relating to things like the business environment in terms of regulations is something for which the OAS provides support, and also the sharing of best practices in public administration and oversight in terms of regulations.

That is important for us in Canada. For example, with the extractive industries, we want to ensure that, when Canada is doing work abroad in member states within the OAS, those member states understand what our responsibilities are and that Canadian companies understand too. We also want to ensure that, within the locus of the OAS, we are sharing best practices and that the people on the ground, particularly those populations affected by Canadian business, understand what our responsibilities are to strengthen oversight and accountability, as well as improve market access for member states.

The House will recall that one of the interesting agendas that the government took on when it was first elected back in 2006 was called the Americas agenda. There were attempts early on for the government to focus on the Americas. There was great fanfare, in fact. There were a lot of announcements made and a couple of trips made. However, one of the challenges for the government is that it did not have a deep agenda on the Americas. Basically, it seemed to be focused on one dimension, which was to negotiate some trade deals—of which they have a couple, Honduras being one—as well as to update deals with Chile and others.

● (1030)

However, what happened was interesting. After a couple of years, they kind of forgot that focus. This came at an expense because there was an opportunity cost. When the Conservatives said they were going to focus on the Americas, there was a pivot away from Africa.

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It has been noted within the OAS member states that they are not sure what Canada's agenda is right now when it comes to the Americas. There seems to be a lack of focus. When it comes to the OAS, this is important because the OAS is a multilateral organization and it is looking at human rights protection. Yes, it is looking at commerce, but it is also looking at how member states can work together to resolve issues around conflict, where Canada can play an important role. I think of issues, such as one that came up a couple of years ago about border disputes between Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

We look at these issues and say Canada can play a role here if it wants to. It has contributed money to the OAS, it has paid its dues and that is to be acknowledged, but we have to do more than just write the cheques. What happened with the government's America policy, Americas focus, is that it seemed to not have a deep enough understanding as to what other roles could be played: on environment, for instance; on responsible development in the extractive industries; on helping with conflict resolutions, as I have mentioned. What about working with those states that are emerging economies and seeing where Canada can support and help, particularly in governance and democratic development? We did not have an offer on that, and what is reflected in the work that is being done through the OAS is that there is a deep need for that support from Canada.

I would hope that the Conservatives will take another look at this report and sharpen their pencils and say that we can do more than just trade deals. Trade is obviously important, but let us look at what else we can do to help our friends in the Americas. If we are going to be successful in negotiating trade deals, what I am hearing from many of these member states is, "What else is Canada offering?" That is something that has to be looked at.

The pivot to the Americas, as it was being seen as, was at a cost. There was an opportunity cost because it meant that there was a lack of investment and focus on Africa. However, at the end of the day what we have is an incoherence. We have, on the one hand, the government pivoting away from Africa, pivoting to the Americas but not with a deep agenda, simply a trade agenda and forgetting the other aspects of those relationships. I would argue that if the Conservatives were to look back to this OAS report, they would find in here numerous things that would help strengthen their initial idea of engaging more in the Americas. It could be on democratic development, on helping on governance, working with Canadian companies for best practices in the extractive industries to benefit people on the ground in some of the countries with which we do business within the OAS family.

Having visited the OAS, I know that the other area where there is an ask and a need for Canada to be more active is the area of human rights. One of the trade deals that the government signed, supported by the Liberal Party, was the free trade agreement with Colombia. There was much fanfare. In fact the Liberal Party made a claim that it was because of its engagement that these side agreements on human rights would be enough to protect those concerns we had around potential human rights abuses. It turns out that those reports have not been timely or sufficient and they have failed.

I would ask that the government look back to this report of the OAS about how we can be more engaged on human rights

protection, on engagement with the OAS, and not just write the cheques but get involved and truly have an Americas agenda that will be more than one-dimensional. If the Conservatives looked at this report and the recommendations that were unanimously supported by all parties, we would be better off as a country in our relationship with the Americas. The Minister of Foreign Affairs should look at the copy that I have in my hand and refresh his memory about what we can do in the Americas. I look forward to his questions.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech.

One aspect of his speech that stood out for me is how Canada's interest and attention have shifted from the Americas to Africa. Paradoxically, what I have been hearing for three years is that on the ground, some embassies and consulates in Africa have been closed, the number of diplomats there has been greatly reduced and those still there are largely ignored by the government when it comes time to make contacts or begin the process of signing agreements or negotiating treaties with specific countries. The diplomatic corps is largely ignored. The government is wreaking havoc on our network, which was well established and had a very good reputation.

What does my colleague think about that attitude, which is so completely contradictory and ambivalent, not to mention costly for Canada's economy and global influence?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, because he nailed it. He talked about the cost of having turned away from places like Africa and not investing in diplomacy to the extent we should. There is a real cost for this.

What is interesting, which I pointed out before to the government in debate in the House, is that it actually undermines its own goals on trade. I will give the example, as I have before, that we were turned away from a seat at the East Asia Summit, which is a very important table for all of the Asian countries to negotiate various things but primarily to look at trade issues. We were not offered a seat, just as we were not offered a seat on the Security Council. The response was, "What are you doing, Canada, beyond just asking for trade?" We have to appreciate this. If we are just going to a country and saying, "Let's do a trade deal", and that is it, it is seen as a one-dimensional and minimalist approach.

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My response to my colleague is this. Within this report, it says that Canada should refocus when it comes to the Americas, through the OAS, on looking at other core competencies that we should be investing in, both through the OAS and as a government, to get back into the business of engagement and focus on the Americas through diplomacy, human rights protection, and democratic development.

• (1040)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we think of the Organization of American States, it is really important that we recognize that Canada has a very important leadership role to play in this whole area. One way we can get an assessment of the degree to which we have to play that leadership role is to look at the regular fund and the amounts of money going into it. I believe Canada is ranked in the top three in terms of percentages.

Could the member comment on just how important it is that Canada play a leadership role with this organization? Within the Liberal Party, we believe that it is critically important to have good multicultural organizations for Canada to get behind and demonstrate leadership.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member that we should keep up with our funding of multilateral organizations.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to get a chance to rise to speak to the report and the good work that the foreign affairs committee has been doing and that this minister has been doing. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has done an outstanding job on the world stage representing Canada. I will be sharing my time with the member for Prince Albert.

We have been working on a number of things at committee and I want to review some of the committee business. Obviously this is a report that was done last year, one that we think is important. When we look at some of the multilateral organizations we are involved with, the OAS is certainly important for the southern hemisphere. The organization has had some challenges over time, but we still believe it is important.

When we were in Washington meeting with various ambassadors and in talking with people, they said it is still important to engage with the OAS and to work with it. We are involved with a number of multilateral organizations, some of which are not always perfect, but we see how important the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE, is in terms of election monitoring, what is going on in Ukraine and the job that Canadians have done over there, the large delegations we have sent, and how important the role has been for Canada.

I want to read some of the conclusions and recommendations of the report, and give the House the framework, just to remind people who may not have had a chance to read the report online. I will read from the conclusions and recommendations for the record. It says:

As the discussion above illustrates, the OAS is not a perfect organization.

I just alluded to that.

It is, however, an important one for Canada and for the hemisphere. The Committee is of the opinion that Canada's long-standing commitment to the OAS as the premier multilateral organization in the Western Hemisphere should continue, focused around the OAS' core competencies of democratic governance, human rights, security, and economic development.

One of the things we heard when we were in Washington was that there was sort of a mission creep. The OAS has looked at maybe continuing to expand its mandate, which multilateral organizations will do from time to time. We heard from various ambassadors and people we talked to in the organization is that maybe the OAS should return to its core, return to some of the things it does well. That is why I say that if we look at some of the competencies of the OAS, such as democratic governance, human rights, security, and economic development, we see that if it could get back to some of those core things, it would make the organization more effective. I will continue on with the conclusion:

That being said, there is a clear and urgent need for reforms that can put the financing of the organization on stable and sustainable footing and return its emphasis to this core work.

One of the issues that were raised was that once again, as usual, Canada is punching away above its weight in terms of financial contributions. Certainly organizations that belong to the OAS pay very little if not much at all. I have a list here that we included in the appendix. I just want to share some of those:

Such reforms would enable the organization to implement its responsibilities in an effective manner and live up to its purposes as established in the organization's founding Charter and the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Canada has and should continue to negotiate reforms in these areas.

We saw in Washington, as we talked to people, that Canada has taken a leadership role in this organization in terms of championing reforms. Canada is also very well respected by all the countries around the table. We are seen as an honest broker. We are seen as somebody who is there to represent the needs of everybody, not somebody who is always trying to implement their will and demands on everybody else. We are seen as somebody who is willing to sit at the table and help negotiate, help lead, and help move forward with real and practical solutions. I will continue. It says:

The Committee is under no illusions about the novelty of these observations, or about the difficulty of realizing reforms.

As I say once again, we understand that the organization is far from perfect, but we also understand that this is one of the few ways that we can help engage in the Americas and why we still need to be at the table.

• (1045)

Canada is one of 34 member states that participate in an organization that works by consensus, and working by consensus is always a challenge. We do not always get everything we want. That is one of the challenges others have as well.

The basic problems facing the OAS are well known. Solutions have been proposed over the years from within and from outside the organization, but decisions that inevitably involve trade-offs in financing or programming, or both, are not easy to reach in any political forum, let alone one representing millions of people from diverse countries that stretch from the north to the south poles.

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The context has also changed since Canada joined the OAS in 1990. The emergence of sub-regional blocks in the hemisphere and political divisions within the OAS are an added complication to the efforts to address the organization's longstanding challenges. We are not so naive to think that the organization does not have issues, but we still believe it is an important one and we should still remain at the table to participate.

However, the existence of the OAS since 1948, its body of concrete accomplishments, and its ability to adapt its work to changes that have taken place in the hemisphere since its founding, are a testament to its value. They are also evidence that the OAS is capable of being dynamic. Moreover, as a multilateral forum, the OAS has and continues to provide space for dialogue and co-operation and the pooling of resources, expertise, and experiences, thus helping to establish conditions to which compromise and shared purpose are possible.

Based on some of these conclusions, here are some of the recommendations the committee put forward as a result of a report on the work that was done down there. The first committee recommendation was:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to support the Organization of American States (OAS) as the premier multilateral organization in the Western Hemisphere.

We believe that, while the organization may not be perfect, this is one of the few areas where we can engage with the southern hemisphere. That is why we believe we should still be at the table.

The second committee recommendation we had was:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to push for reforms to strengthen the OAS with its like-minded partners through the OAS General Assembly and Permanent Council.

In talking with our ambassador and staff, who are well respected there, they and our government realize that this organization needs to continue to look at reforms to strengthen it. We realize there is more that could be done. We realize that, in terms of some of the things we have been involved with over the years, it has continued to require more and more resources and, if it were to sharpen its focus on some of these things, this would make it a more effective organization.

Therefore, as part of that, the second recommendation was to continue to push reforms to strengthen the OAS and its like-minded partners through the OAS general assembly and permanent council. These possible reforms would:

a. Return the organization's focus to its core areas of work, namely democratic governance, human rights, security, and development;

There have been a number of different areas in which OAS is involved. We believe that, if it would go back to the core, that would be more effective and certainly more focused and important.

b. Result in a substantial reduction in the number of existing OAS mandates, principally those that fall outside of the organization's core areas of work (as listed above);

Once again, mission creep has happened here in terms of where it is at.

c. Lead to a formula for increasing member states' assessed quotas to the OAS regular fund to a degree that is at minimum sufficient to cover annual inflationary and personnel costs;

While we believe that we share the leadership role there, we also believe that other countries should do their fair share, and probably more, in terms of financial support.

d. Encourage consideration of the proposal to reduce the United States' quota to 49% of the OAS regular fund, so long as doing so would not result in a reduction in the regular fund's total budget;

e. Institute a process whereby new mandates cannot be added to the OAS' portfolio of work without funding sources being identified, accompanied by an analysis of the rationale for OAS action in the relevant area; and

● (1050)

f. Ensure that all reasonable OAS activities related to the promotion and protection of democratic governance and human rights are fully, consistently and predictably funded.

Once again, as we look at some of the things in which this organization is involved, the recommendations of the committee were to go back to its core, to focus on what it does well, and to make sure it continues to represent democracy in that area.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments. I want to pick up on the member's last comments on going back to that core. This is something we often need to look at. As organizations develop, they will often look for additional things and responsibilities to take on. It was an important recommendation coming out of the committee.

We deal with issues of human rights and the whole idea of democracy and so forth. In Winnipeg, later this year, we are going to have the official opening of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in the heart of downtown Winnipeg.

People are concerned about human rights and the issue of human rights. I wonder if the member would provide some further comment regarding the important role that the organization plays in this hemisphere with regard to the whole issue of human rights.

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, the challenge we have in the southern hemisphere is that there are a few states that still present a lot of problems. If we look at Venezuela as an example, I remember meeting with colleagues from Colombia a short time ago, who were concerned with what is going on in that area.

We have a number of states, or national actors, that are probably a challenge. One of the things that an organization like this could do is bring about peer pressure. If we have a number of organizations, they could encourage bad actors to step up their game, so to speak. That is why it is important to have them at the table.

Venezuela, in recent times, has done a number of different things that are undemocratic, quite frankly, in the way it has operated over the years. That is probably an understatement.

What is helpful is that we have a collection of countries, especially from the area, that can look at what these members are doing and can encourage them to behave better.

● (1055)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech. I also want to congratulate him for chairing the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development with such control.

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The government's response to recommendation 2f states: "The Government of Canada supports this recommendation in principle." I would like to hear more from the hon. member on the meaning of the second paragraph, which states:

In keeping with its overall emphasis on budget discipline and good management practices, Canada has also promoted the adoption of results-based planning, to ensure the most efficient use of scarce resources.

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way who sits on the foreign affairs committee. As a committee, we work very well together on some of the issues we are studying. As I mentioned before, we have been looking at things such as Syria and Ukraine. We are now working on the protection of children and young people, as a new study.

He talks about recommendation 2(f), which, once again, would:

Ensure that all reasonable OAS activities related to the promotion and protection of democratic governance and human rights are fully, consistently and predictably funded.

One of the things we looked at was those core competencies that we see the OAS as being good at, and if it could focus on those, that would make it a lot easier. It would also make sure it is able to focus on the things it does well and in which it has the most impact.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is quite an interesting debate for me because of all the work I do with ParlAmericas and the work we have been doing in central South America, the Caribbean region, and of course in the western hemisphere.

I would like to give members some background information about ParlAmericas. ParlAmericas is a parliamentary organization of parliamentarians of all parties. It was created in the OAS and has a memorandum of understanding with the OAS to work on building the capacity of parliamentarians throughout the region.

A lot of the funding for ParlAmericas comes from the Canadian government. The project was originally funded through CIDA, and its goals are multifaceted. We were empowered with looking at how we could build capacity with parliamentarians throughout the western hemisphere, and ParlAmericas has been doing that over the last few years with funding from the Canadian government.

A women's working group is one of the branches of ParlAmericas. A woman vice-president of ParlAmericas sits on the board. This group talks about women's issues in general and women's issues for parliamentarians. They talk about the barriers for a woman who wants to become a member of congress or a senator and how those barriers can be taken down and how it could be made easier for women to reach all they want to reach and attain the goals they want to achieve. ParlAmericas has been working on these types of issues through a variety of workshops and events in the region.

Another example is in Mexico. There will be a meeting in Mexico City at the end of June for women parliamentarians from all across the western hemisphere. Men will also be there. They want to identify problems and solutions and share ideas and best practices. From that come better and stronger women parliamentarians, and male parliamentarians get a better understanding of the issues that women face in Parliament. That is just one of the areas on which ParlAmericas works.

Different topics have come up in the region; for example, security. When we look at security in the region, whether it be drugs or human trafficking, a lot of people in Canada ask why we would have a huge interest in that, why that would concern us. Canada is one of the consumers of these drug products, so we have an interest in the region and we need to be supportive. We have done work in Costa Rica and in other areas. We have talked about these issues and how we can support those countries as they take on the drug battle.

When it comes to organized crime and drugs, clamping down on one country is like clamping down on a tube of toothpaste. If we clamp down on it here, it pops up somewhere else. We cannot just do it country by country. We have to look at the region as a whole and we have to attack the issue as a whole to get true results. That is something Canada has done strongly, and an area in which it has been very active.

Promoting governance and transparency are other issues we have been working on through ParlAmericas. That involves working with parliamentarians to understand the importance of transparency and how it is in their benefit to have transparency, to have good governance. This again brings parliamentarians together to talk about best practices, what works, what does not work, how we can take something that works in Colombia and make it work in Honduras. Those are the strengths ParlAmericas brings together, and again, it is non-partisan. It is members of all parties sharing different ideas to build the capacity of parliamentarians, to provide a better parliamentary structure, which would bring better governance and allow them to make better decisions when they go back to their legislatures.

There is one interesting thing to note when we talk about public security. I still remember this. We were in Panama talking about human smuggling and kidnapping. It was very interesting to hear the guys from Colombia talk about what they did to counterattack kidnapping. The guys from Honduras asked them questions. As the exchange went on between the two members, they started comparing ideas on what worked and what did not work. Very substantial information was exchanged over a table.

The other thing that was important is that they started exchanging their contact information. They exchanged their BBM pins, because they all use BBM. They love BlackBerry down there, by the way—I will get that plug in. They started exchanging ideas on how to talk to each other.

Therefore, not only did the discussion take place around the meeting table in Panama, but those discussions are now taking place among legislatures and parliamentarians in various countries. That is good to hear because they are sharing best practices. They are looking at the issue as a regional issue. They are looking at how to attack these things on a regional basis. They are working together.

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The Canadian section of ParlAmericas has also been very active in the region. Members from all parties just finished a trip to Peru where we toured a Canadian mine site. It was beneficial for all parties to see exactly how Canadian mining companies act in Peru. We toured the site. We saw how they treated their employees. We saw the safety precautions and the level of business professionalism of Canadian companies in that region.

• (1100)

They are running that mine as if it was in Canada. They are basically looking at the regulations we have in Canada and are applying them to make sure they have the same working conditions there as they would if they were in Canada.

It was very interesting to listen to my colleagues from the NDP talk about how good this was. That shows exactly what Canadian companies, in being responsible, are doing abroad.

I was talking to a person in the embassy who said that the Chinese companies, when they are looking at a new mine project, are actually trying to hire Canadians to lead these projects, because Canadians understand how to do it properly, how to engage the local communities, and how to make sure the benefits reach throughout the region and not just one specific area.

That is something Canada brings to the table, not just in Peru but also in Colombia, Chile, and other regions. We are actually setting the bar at a higher standard with respect to the environment and the co-operation of the aboriginal people and how to engage them. That is something Canada is very strong in. We should be proud of that and should encourage that.

Another thing we talked about when we were in Peru was security issues. They gave us an overview of the human rights abuses. They talked about some of the challenges, such as growth challenges in Lima.

Again, this bilateral visit allowed parliamentarians from all parties to get a good view of exactly what is happening in Peru.

The member talked about trade in his opening speech, and I found it very interesting. Trade is definitely one of the tools, in fact a major tool, for helping out in those regions. The best thing we can do is take them from a very poor existence and livelihood and give them proper jobs so they can actually take care of their families and be active contributing citizens in their society.

If we look at the Honduras trade deal that is in front of us, that is what they are looking for from trade. They are looking for an alternative to the drug trafficking crimes and those types of things where that is the only type of employment they have.

Let us look at companies that are in Honduras, such as Gildan. What would those employees be doing if Gildan was not there? Gildan is another Canadian company that is doing a great job. I have actually toured their facilities. Again, the facility is something we would see here in Canada, with the wages and the way they treat their employees. They actually have a hospital on-site to take care of their employees. Again, here is an example of Canadian corporate responsibility actually being enacted in other parts of the world.

As trade increases, and Colombia is very good example, the middle class actually grows. We can start seeing less and less crime. It is a very direct link. As trade goes up, crime goes down and the economy starts to emerge and flourish. Colombia is a prime example of what can happen when trade and commercial activity is allowed to happen. It is very interesting to look at Colombia over the last 10 or 15 years and how trade has impacted it.

Chile has more trade agreements than Canada. Chile was very aggressive. We can see how Chile has progressed in the region compared to other countries in the region. It is because it has embraced that model to allow openness and to put in a good structure. Investment in Chile is a fairly secure investment.

Canadian companies are very active in Chile. This is what Honduras is looking for, and that is why I think the trade deal with Honduras is as much a social deal as it is a business deal. What it will do is provide opportunities for Canadian companies and Honduran companies to import and export products, to take advantage of each other's strengths, and to partner.

The benefit will be, and has to be, the people in Honduras, so they have good quality jobs to go to, so they can take care of their families, and so they do not have to look to crime and the negative aspects of society to make a living. That is where trade is very important, and it is just one piece of the puzzle.

When we go back to the ParlAmericas and the work we have been doing and the work I have had the pleasure to be involved with as chair, we can see the growth. We can see what is happening in the region. They are like-minded. They want to achieve. They want to do what is right for their citizens. They want to grow the economy. They want to have the things Canada has.

One thing I am told when I am down there is that they need more Canada in the region. They understand that Canada has the ability to bring people from different cultures together, to grab that strength of different cultures and utilize it. We have done a very good job of that. It fascinates them. They look at Canada and say that we have been so strong. We are punching above our weight and yet are so fair and decent. That is what they want.

When it comes to Canada and our role within the region, we should be very proud of what we have been doing and very proud of the minister. I know that he is going to be engaged in the region again in the next couple of weeks. He has been very active in the region in the past, and we need to see that continue. It is in our interest to see them succeed.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Prince Albert for his speech.

I especially want to thank him for mentioning the proposed Canada-Honduras free trade agreement because I think it is an example of the government's naive and very simplistic approach to advancing human rights in various countries around the world and in the Americas in particular.

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I will give an example dating back to the late 1950s and early 1960s, after France's failure in Indochina in the face of the Communist movement. Members will recall the famous domino theory. This resulted in the United States in particular entering the Vietnam war and trying to find a solution to the supposed potential invasion of neighbouring countries by what was known at the time as the evil of Communism.

Similarly, can my colleague quote a single compelling, documented, clear example of a trade agreement of this type that protects the human rights of the people in question?

I maintain the exact opposite. The government concerned must take responsibility well in advance of considering a trade agreement. To my mind, this clearly amounts to blind support on Canada's part for Honduras.

• (1110)

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question, but it just shows how wrong he is on the issue and how wrong the NDP is in looking at this.

The country of Honduras is a good example. It wants a hand up. It wants help. When we look at what we have done in the past, it has not worked.

Let us look at a country like Colombia, where we have done a trade deal, and see what has happened because of it. We have given it a hand up and it has improved its human rights situation and its crime situation. That is how I look at this.

What can we do to help the people of Honduras? What was done in the past has not worked, so let us do a trade deal with them. Let us help their business communities, help them grow, and give them jobs so they do not have to work in the drug trade or smuggle people. We can do that through trade. Doing what we do now is not working, so we have to look at what we can do to help them out.

If we want influence in Honduras, then let us do business with Honduras. When we do business with Honduras, we gain influence and actually impact what they are doing and how they are doing it. Let them learn from us as we help them forward. Trade is one of the many steps. To oppose that is to basically tell Honduras that it will never be good enough, that we are never going to help, forget it, and it does not deserve anything. That is wrong.

The people of Honduras deserve a better lifestyle. They deserve our help, and trade is one of the great tools we can give them to do that. Anything else is shameful.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member for Prince Albert. He works pretty hard on Central America, and he is also learning Spanish. I saw him learning some Spanish when he was down there.

His points are well taken, especially when he commented on the importance of governance, trade, and the economy and how they are the best things one could have to foster democracy in a country.

One question I have for the member deals with Canada's involvement in the OAS. I think it is a successful organization. If there was a similar organization in Africa, maybe things could be

better for some of the democracies on that continent. Maybe the member could comment on that.

I also want to talk about the involvement of Canada and how much more of a role it should play in this important multilateral organization.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It was interesting that when I was down there taking language lessons, I stayed in a hotel, and when I looked across my balcony, who did I see? It was the member with his wife on holiday. It was nice to see them, and we had a great evening enjoying each other's company.

The member posed a good question: what are the alternatives for Canada?

I acknowledge that I am not a specialist on Africa. I concentrate on Central and South America and the western hemisphere. However, when I look at the OAS, that is our way to plug into that region. It is the only tool we have in a bilateral or multilateral organization to plug into and have influence.

Yes, the OAS has some challenges. There is no question about it. However, in the same breath, it is a very respectable tool for us to work through to achieve greater benefits within the region.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to speak on this topic today. I am on the agriculture committee, but most of the committees I have been on since I was elected in 2000 have dealt with foreign affairs and trade. I remember the first time our trade committee went to South America and we saw all the changes that were made in South America, especially in Chile and Peru. All of it was because of trade agreements but also because of the involvement of the Organization of American States.

I also got to go with the foreign affairs committee, with many of my colleagues, to the OAS headquarters in Washington. I think Carnegie originally built the building for the Organization of American States with the intention of making the Americas more democratic and more prosperous as they were developing. The States were going through a good time in the early 1900s, but other parts of the Americas were not.

I think it is very important that the foreign affairs committee is embarking on this, and Canada should continue to negotiate reforms, because not everything is perfect there, especially with respect to who is contributing.

The committee is under no illusions about the novelty of these observations or about the difficulty of realizing reforms. Canada is only one of the 34 member states that participate in an organization that works by consensus. It does not matter if one pays more or less into it, it is by consensus, and that is difficult. The basic problems facing the OAS are well known. Some of them were mentioned today. Solutions have been proposed over the years from within and from outside the organization.

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Decisions that inevitably involve trade-offs and financing or programming, or both, are not easy to reach. They are not easy to reach in any political forum, let alone in one representing millions of people from diverse countries that stretch from the North Pole to the South Pole. That is a lot of countries and a big area to cover, with many different languages and different ideologies.

The context has also changed since Canada joined. We joined the OAS in 1990. The emergence of the sub-regional blocs in the hemisphere and political divisions within the OAS are added complications, of course, in any efforts to address the organization's long-standing challenges.

However, the existence of the OAS since 1948, its body of concrete accomplishments, and its ability to adapt its work to changes that have taken place in the hemisphere since its founding are a testament to its value.

There is also evidence that the OAS is capable of being dynamic. Moreover, as a multilateral forum, the OAS has and can continue to provide space for dialogue and co-operation and the pooling of resources, expertise, and experiences, thus helping to establish conditions where compromise and shared purpose are possible. It has come a long way since the start, and other countries have joined.

When we were there, we talked to people in charge on the military side and in the different departments within it. Of course, they always talk about the money and that there is just not enough money to keep things going.

Sometimes different governments bring their ideologies to the table at the OAS, or one country does not want another to be there, which does not make it easy.

We have to hand it to the United States. It pays the lion's share, 49%, yet it tries its utmost not to be heavy-handed in a lot of the decisions.

I think there are all kinds of problems, but at the end of the day, it is a good organization.

I would like to talk about some of the recommendations that were put forward, because I think it is very important and a lot of work was done by the committee members to put this forward. I would like to start off with the first recommendation.

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to support the OAS as the [number one] multilateral organization in the Western Hemisphere.

I think that is key. It is not only that we be involved but that we look at it as the number one organization.

We never know what can crop up in our sphere, in the Americas. The OAS could help with many of the situations that arise, especially in dealing with helping some of these countries get good governance. There is a mix there.

● (1115)

I know the Liberal Party is very in favour of the free trade agreements. They are not always perfect, but they are important. Governance is also important.

The second recommendation that comes into play is, "The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to

push for reforms to strengthen the OAS with its like-minded partners through the OAS General Assembly and Permanent Council". This is very important.

Part (a) of that recommendation is, "Return the organization's focus to its core areas of work, namely democratic governance, human rights, security and development". In the many years it has been in existence, the organization has left its mandate and has taken on so many different things for the same amount of money, because the countries are giving the same amount of money. It has watered down many of its initiatives. This recommendation is very important in that it returns the organization to its intended focus.

For some of the other areas the OAS is in, other multilateral organizations could probably fit the bill for that. The United Nations and other organizations in the world probably could take care of some of the issues the OAS has taken on with its small budget. That has put it in jeopardy or, at the very least, put some stress on the system. It is important for it to go back to those recommendations, the core areas of democratic governance, human rights, security and development.

Recommendation 2(b) states, "Result in a substantial reduction in the number of existing OAS mandates, principally those that fall outside organizations' core areas of work". Therefore, (a) and (b) go together because (a) focuses on certain areas. To do that, some others will have come off the table. That is why (b) goes very well with (a) because some will have to go. Hard decisions have to be made.

Recommendation 2(c) states, "Lead to a formula for increasing member states' assessed quotas to the OAS regular fund to a degree that is at minimum sufficient to cover annual inflationary and personnel costs".

When we visited Washington, many good people were working in the organization. Many Canadians work there. These people come from other countries. It is not a cheap city to live in, so the costs go up. This recommendation is important because member states should pay their way. The Americans could just cut a cheque and pay the whole thing, but that does not make a good organization because then they would say that because they were paying the way, it should have the say. That does not work. It is very important that all countries pay into it because if they pay, they can come to the table. We are not happy with what is happening in Venezuela, but it is important that it pays into it because it will come to the table and we can discuss issues.

One of the key issues is who is paying and who has the say. It is very important. Once this is set up, 49% is a good number for Americans. They are the most dominant player in the Americas, but 49% means they cannot have the full say. The percentages are right, but everyone has to step up to the plate on the payment.

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Recommendation 2(d) flows in with that. It states, "Encourage consideration of the proposal to reduce the United States' quote to 49% of the OAS regular fund, so long as doing so", and this is important, "would not result in a reduction in the regular fund's total budget". It wants to keep the United States to 49%, but others have to come to the plate. Over the years it was hard for many of these countries to pay the bills. Years ago, Brazil, Chile and Peru were not in good shape, so it was very difficult for them to come up with the cash. However, when we look at these countries now, they are doing fairly well.

• (1120)

Their economies are not totally booming, but a lot of the help from OAS have helped these countries become better democracies and participants, and their economies to be better. Therefore, they are in a position now where it is time to pay back. OAS has done well for those countries, so they should put a little more cash on the table, which would help other countries that are going through harder times. As was mentioned before, Honduras and other countries are still not where we would like them to be in the Americas hemisphere.

Recommendation (e) states, "Institute a process whereby new mandates cannot be added to the OAS' portfolio of work without funding sources being identified, accompanied by an analysis of the rationale for OAS action in the relevant area". If we are to go through this whole rational process and getting some things off the table and if we are to keep our course, before we go down that path and make mistakes like we did over the years, we need to ensure the money is in hand. We need to ensure there is cash on the table before we put stress on the whole system again.

Then we go on to recommendation (f), which states, "Ensure that all reasonable OAS activities related to the promotion and protection of democratic governance and human rights are fully, consistently and predictably funded".

When we look at the different recommendations, we can sum them up in various ways. First is to go back to the core mandate. Second is funding to fulfill our mandate. Third, if there is to be anything coming forth, the money has to be on the table.

I would like to talk a bit about my experience.

Hon. John Baird: Tell us about your vacation in Mexico.

Hon. Mark Eyking: My vacation was not in Mexico, Mr. Speaker.

I am sure the House wants to hear about my experiences in Central America because it started a long time ago when I was farming. I was a vegetable farmer and I was asked to go to Panama to help the farmers there. It is so fitting for this topic. It was in the early 1990s when Noriega got the boot and Panama was going through a major transformation. It had a big army. Also the Americans were pulling out of the Panama Canal and passing it over to Panama, but they were also pulling out their U.S. base there. The country was going through a major transformation and the government needed help restructuring. It went from an army with hundreds of thousands of people with guns and all of a sudden it would have a small security force similar to Costa Rica. Therefore, how was Panama going to develop and evolve?

The Panamanian government approached me to help the farmers in the northern region, and at that time it was quite chaotic up there. Most of the people were running around with guns. It was an area that was great for growing vegetables, but people were growing crops for drugs. However, the Panamanian people and I worked together and we brought in technology. I saw the first elections happen there. We brought in technologies for irrigation and growing conditions.

We saw a transformation, and OAS played a part in that. Meanwhile many of us were helping the country on the resource side, but also a new governance structure was put in place. Right now Panama is one of the fastest-growing countries in the Americas and one of the main reasons is the OAS stepped in there and helped it with its new constitution. The Panamanian government had a big challenge. It had to take over the Panama Canal. It lost all the money from the U.S. base, but the government turned it around, and OAS played a big role.

I have been returning every few years to check up with the farmers to see how they are doing, and they are doing fantastically. They have greenhouses. They are growing vegetables for the whole of Central America. It is not because a Cape Breton farmer went down there and helped them. It is because of the structure of their country.

• (1125)

People could invest. Farmers knew if they invested in their land and equipment, it would not be taken away because the rule of governance was there.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Five minutes, 54 seconds.

Hon. Mark Eyking: This is something the New Democrats should want to hear, Mr. Speaker. I do not know why they are trying to slow me down and cut me off.

I often commend their comments on the OAS. When I was at the OAS with them, I was amazed at the good input they had. They should let everybody have their say here.

The foreign affairs minister said that I was on vacation in Panama. Yes, I was at a hotel, but I went down to check on the farmers. I checked out what they were doing. It is amazing what they are growing there. Now they are starting to grow flowers, which they will be exporting, and the airports are booming. People who have any concerns about the OAS and how well our money is being spent should go to Panama and see the transformation that has happened within 20 years. It is an economic miracle. It is like the miracle we saw in Europe when it went through the Marshall Plan. It is where there is ownership of property and rules of governance, and all these things come together. Then people have faith and they invest.

I will now talk about some of the countries in the OAS. I am sure many of my colleagues know about them. I will go through them alphabetically.

There are Argentina and Antigua. I have some of the numbers on how much money they are contributing. They are not big dollars: Argentina, almost \$2 million; Barbados, \$36,000; the Bahamas, \$50,000; Bolivia, \$40,000. Even these four or five countries are doing a little better and they should up the ante a bit. Barbados is doing quite well now.

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Brazil is not doing badly. It is putting \$8 million on the table. Canada is putting almost \$10 million on the table. When we look at that comparison, Brazil has a couple of hundred million people and we have 30-some million. For us to come up with \$10 million, we are doing our share, when we look at the total budget. I know Brazil is \$8 million and some are only \$100,000, but for a country that size, having these other countries around that have good governance and good structures in place is important.

Chile puts a \$1 million on the table. That could be up a bit, too. Colombia is \$800,000. Costa Rica is \$180,000. That country sells that amount in bananas to us in one week. There is no reason why it could not come to the plate with a little more. The Dominican Republic is \$290,000 and Ecuador is \$200,000. I am sure the Canadian public wants to hear this. Canadians want to know how much everybody else is paying. It is very important because we are paying \$10 million.

I will go down the list: Grenada, \$17,000; Guatemala, \$137,000; Guyana, \$17,900. Then there is poor little Haiti. I know it is going through a hard time. One would ask why Haiti should even pay, because it is going through such a hard economic time, but it is paying \$27,000. It is very important that Haiti pays that money. Why? Because it then has a voice at the table. It is a country that is going through the most difficult time in the Americas right now and it is very important that it has a representative at the table, so it is paying some money.

Mexico is \$6 million and St. Kitts is \$20,000. The United States is where the money comes from. It pays \$48 million. I am guessing it is a total of about \$100 million needed to run this organization. A hundred million dollars is a lot of money, but it is very important money. All the countries in the Americas have to up the ante a bit to make this better because it is good for those countries and democracy. We should think about what would have happened with the Americas if we did not have the OAS.

• (1130)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed hearing my hon. colleague's remarks. They were edifying and educational.

We are talking about the Organization of American States. This is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, multilateral bodies in existence.

We know, of course, that the government has had some difficulties in the past with multilateral bodies. I can point out the kind of approach the Conservatives take to the United Nations. I think they call it our moral relativism with respect to these bodies. Of course, they are not morally relativistic or relatively moral or whatever the equivalent words are. That is how they have always approached things. They are right and full of bluster and they go around telling everybody exactly what has to be done.

This other multilateral body includes all of the Americas. Given that the government approaches multilateral bodies in a certain way and given that my hon. colleague has vast experience in that area from his previous portfolios, as evidenced during his very interesting dissertation, I wonder if he has any comments to offer with respect to how the government, which has said that it would place an emphasis on the Americas, has approached the Organization of American States. Are there examples of how it has really jumped on board and

tried to be a force for constructive unity and commonality of purpose within that organization? I would be interested in hearing his comments.

• (1135)

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Speaker, it is very important that Canada stay on track with the OAS. We should be able to take the lead. People come to us all the time asking us to give a little more. If we are at \$10 million now, we should keep up with inflation and—

Hon. John Baird: Just spend more, in the Kathleen Wynne Liberal—

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Speaker, I do not mean we should spend more, but we should stick to our share. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is heckling over there.

When we are in these multilateral groups, it is also important that we not impose our ideology on them. That is very important, because we have seen that with the Conservative government in relation to the UN. It is very important for Canada to play the middle and act as a referee with the OAS, because there is no doubt that there are lots of ideologies floating around in the Americas. When the Americans are there along with the Cubans, everybody is in the rumble, so it is very important that we be consistent when we are in these multilateral groups. Whether it is the current Conservative government or the next Liberal government, whoever is there should make sure our values are consistent. Even our bureaucrats, our ambassadors on these organizations, have to be consistent. When we start throwing our ideologies around, it messes it up, and we start holding money back. That is not the role Canada is respected for around the world. Our role there is to show leadership and pay our share. Then many of these countries and organizations come to us for advice on keeping this world a better place as we move forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague for his presentation today, to which I listened carefully.

The response to the report indicates that the government supports recommendation 2f in principle. The second paragraph of this response states:

In keeping with [the government's] overall emphasis on budget discipline and good management practices, Canada has also promoted the adoption of results-based planning, to ensure the most efficient use of scarce resources.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on the government's response.

[*English*]

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. There is no doubt that results are very important. If we are going to be using Canadian taxpayers' money to the tune of \$10 million, it is important that we get results.

Routine Proceedings

Sometimes it is our own fault as parliamentarians, although I know some of our parliamentary organizations do tell Canadians where their \$10 million is going and what results we are getting.

I found out what happening in Panama because I was doing a project there, but when I came back to Canada, I found that nobody knew Canada was putting money toward the OAS. I do not think that most Canadians, if we asked them on the street, would even be able to tell us what the OAS is.

It is important. It does not sound like a lot when we say \$10 million, but \$10 million is a lot of money. It is money well spent, but we have to get results. We have to tell Canadians what we are spending money on. It is very important who we have at the table representing Canada and making sure that these results are happening.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, when I had the honour of taking my first space flight, I had the chance to travel over the Americas. I remember the first time I looked out the window. We were over Brazil. At the time, Brazil was in the process of eliminating part of the Amazon rainforest, and for valid reasons: it wanted to provide more land for farmers.

They had set the forest on fire. There was so much smoke that we could not even see the ground. They were burning a lot of virgin forest. We were concerned about the fact that one of our planet's great lungs was disappearing. Today, the situation has improved.

Our relationship with fast-growing countries like Brazil is especially important. Since we have already signed free trade agreements with other countries, I would like to ask my colleague whether he is personally in favour of more free trade agreements, particularly with the Americas.

● (1140)

[*English*]

For example, what we call the trans-Pacific partnership includes countries in the Americas.

I would be interested in knowing how he feels about developing stronger links economically with some of the countries in the Americas and whether he thinks that would be a good thing for Canada.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Speaker, that is another good question from the member.

He talked about looking at Brazil, which is a beautiful country. I have been there a couple of times. We were there when I was on the trade committee. However, as a farmer, I think it is terrible that Brazil is burning the forest down. Not only that, the soil in Brazil is very shallow, so it is a matter of just two or three years until that soil is depleted. Very old trees are being cut down, and for what? Is it for the sake of some crops for a couple of years? No nutrition is being put back in, and it is being left bare.

As a result, there are multiple effects. Not only are a lot of emissions going into the air with the smoke, but the soil is also being ruined. The river is being ruined. We can probably see all the mud going into it from space.

These trade agreements are important. Yes, we had a big debate in the House when we were doing the Colombian trade agreement, and yes, it might not have been perfect, but when we do trade agreements and we put stipulations into them, it helps us to put forth our ideals and values to another country. If we are going to be buying products, we expect them to be produced in an environmentally friendly way or in a way that respects human rights. It is very important that we continue to have these trade agreements, but it is also important to include stipulations in them.

The environment was mentioned. It is important that the OAS has a bit of a role to play in the environment, but it does not say it here. It says:

...return the organization's focus to its core areas of work, namely democratic governance, human rights, security, and development;

Let us look at the environment and human rights. If somebody is depleting a forest inhabited by an indigenous people, there is a human rights violation. In terms of security, if the environment is not cared for, the security of a country is in jeopardy. Many times the environment can play a role in the key areas that the OAS intends to return to.

Not only is it important for the environment to be part of the mandate of the OAS within the context of this statement, but when we are doing these trade agreements, we also have to make sure that our values are instilled in the products that we are going to be buying from these countries.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):

[*Member spoke in Spanish as follows:*]

Muchas gracias, señor Presidente.

No hablo mucho español. Aprendí español en la escuela.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the chance to join this debate on the Organization of American States and the great work that the foreign affairs committee did in its report.

Obviously the OAS is the hemisphere's foremost institution, and Canada has made the OAS a significant priority.

I am so pleased to hear my colleague from Cape Breton, who is a good fellow, speak about his admiration and respect for the OAS. We remember that Mr. Trudeau and the Liberal Party did not want Canada to be part of the Organization of American States. In fact, Brian Mulroney and the Conservatives were in government in 1990 when Canada joined the Organization of American States. It is another example of the strong leadership of the Mulroney government, and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development served very capably and ably in that organization.

We are tremendously engaged in this organization. Our engagement is real and it is significant. I want to pay tribute to the member for Calgary—Nose Hill. As Minister of State for the Americas, she led Canada's engagement with the Organization of American States. We can be very proud of the work she did, whether in promoting freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, the issue of security, or combatting crime, which has been a priority.

We have established many partnerships with countries in the Organization of American States through which we have worked with a third country. For example, Canada worked with Chile on some security projects in Central America. We work right now with Brazil on security issues and policing in Haiti. The organization has been very good for Canada.

I will depart later today on a trip that will take me to the annual meeting of the Organization of American States, which will take place in Paraguay. We will be discussing the salient issues of the day. I will also visit Argentina, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Bolivia is a country in which we have done a lot development assistance to try to improve the standard of living for people there.

Obviously trade has been a priority for us, because we want to see economic growth, and not just in Canada. We want the same for all people in the Americas. We want prosperity so that people can provide for themselves and provide for their families.

We have some of the strongest and most capable ambassadors in the Americas. We have Gary Doer in Washington. He has done an outstanding job for Canada and is undoubtedly one of our very best. We have great ambassadors in Brazil, in Argentina, in Peru. A lot of women play strong roles for Canada as our ambassadors there.

I am so keen to strengthen our bilateral relations with the OAS and member countries that I want to get back to work to do that, so I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

• (1145)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 155*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allison

Routine Proceedings

Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Clarke	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	O'Toole
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 138

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Atamanenko
Aubin	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Boivin
Borg	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)

Routine Proceedings

Davies (Vancouver East)	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeman
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Péclet
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Turmel	Valerioté— 104

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today.

The first petition is on Lyme disease, which has affected a number of folks in my riding. They ask that the government find a way to make sure that it can be diagnosed properly. Many of these folks who suffer from this disease find that the testing that is done here does not suggest that they have Lyme disease, and then they do not know what has happened to them. They end up being diagnosed in the United States, which usually costs thousands of dollars.

The petitioners call upon the government to investigate and find a way to make sure that this disease can be detected in a more expeditious fashion.

● (1230)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): The second petition is on farmers' right to save seeds. Farmers are calling upon the government, when it comes to Bill C-18, to ensure that they have the right to save seeds, such as they have done in the past.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the final petition is about a fair electoral voting system so that folks would have the right to have their vote count with a sense of proportional representation.

RAILWAY TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of petitioners from Ottawa; Arnprior; Rockland; Namur, Quebec; Corner Brook, Newfoundland; Richmond; Sault Ste. Marie; Echo Bay; Huron Bay; Hilton Beach; and Wikwemikong. The petition is with respect to passenger rail in northern Ontario, specifically the Algoma Central Railway passenger rail.

The petitioners are concerned that the government has not seen fit to consult with the stakeholders. This rail is the sole access for many businesses, homes, and communities and it could be lost, which would damage their economy, health, safety, business aspects, and accessibility to the area. The petitioners ask the government to reinstate its funding.

Although the government has actually provided some funding, it is only for another year. Therefore, the petitioners remain concerned with respect to the viability of this passenger rail service. We should be moving forward on passenger rail.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table petitions containing the names of hundreds of British Columbians who have signed the petition called "Kimberly's law", a petition for prevention and accountability.

The petition is asking for changes in federal and provincial criminal justice legislation. It was drawn up by the family of Kimberly Proctor, who was brutally murdered on March 18, 2010 in my riding. I commend the Proctor family for its efforts to try to create something positive out of this unspeakable family tragedy.

I am tabling these petitions for the consideration of the House today out of respect for the life of Kimberly Proctor and for the efforts of her family to make sure that what happened to their daughter never happens to anyone else in Canada.

EMERGENCY PROTECTION ORDER

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present two petitions today on behalf of citizens of my constituency.

The first petition is on the emergency protection order for the greater sage-grouse in Canada. Petitioners ask that the Government of Canada rescind the emergency protection order and replace it with an order that encourages voluntary implementation.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I present is also on behalf of the citizens of Medicine Hat. The petitioners would like to have the House of Commons rescind the Species at Risk Act and replace it with an act that encourages voluntary implementation.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions. I am extraordinarily heartened to present over a thousand names of Canadians from coast to coast in support, as are all the parties in the House of Commons, of Bill C-442, an act to create a national strategy on Lyme disease. Thousands of Canadians are asking for our help.

Earlier this morning in the health committee I spoke to this. We have such strong support from across the country and around the House, so let us get on with it.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is from residents of my own riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands exclusively. They are calling on the House to protect Saanich Inlet by adding it to the list of designated zones where the discharge of raw sewage is specifically disallowed. We want a sewage-free Saanich Inlet.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from thousands of Canadians who want the government to take measures to stop the global practice of shark finning and to ensure the responsible conservation and management of sharks. They call on the government to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of sharks to Canada.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present two petitions from beautiful Langley.

Kassandra Kaulius was 22 years old when she was killed by a drunk driver. A group of people called Families for Justice, who have also lost loved ones to drunk drivers, are calling on Parliament to provide mandatory minimum sentencing for people who have been convicted of driving while impaired and killing someone.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the fact that in the world there are over 200 million girls missing right now due to sex-selective pregnancy termination, creating a gender imbalance. Petitioners are calling on Parliament to condemn that practice.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions and I will be very brief.

The first petition is from Albertans. Petitioners point out that Canada is the only OECD country without a national public transit strategy and there is an \$18-billion gap in transit funding. They are calling on the government to put in place a Canada public transit strategy.

Routine Proceedings

● (1235)

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Alberta. They are calling on the government to require the labelling of genetically modified foods on the basis that Canadians have the right to know what they are eating.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is from Albertans, again. Petitioners are very concerned about the fact that the laws regulating animal cruelty are very weak. They are calling on members of this place to support Bill C-592, an act to amend the Criminal Code to prevent and respond to cruelty to animals.

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present petitions from a number of people who are concerned about the reduced services at Canada Post and the shameful cuts that have been announced.

They are particularly concerned about the fact that people with reduced mobility and seniors will have a very hard time getting access to such an essential service.

I hope that the government will encourage Canada Post to consider other options instead of going through with the cuts.

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present to the House a petition from constituents in my riding. The petition calls on the government to refrain from making any changes to the Seeds Act or the Plant Breeders' Rights Act through Bill C-18, an act to amend certain acts relating to agriculture and agri-food.

CANADA POST

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition in the House today concerning the reduction in Canada Post's services.

The petitioners from in and around my riding of Beaches—East York draw the attention of the House to a breach in the government's promise to better protect consumers by way of its plan to eliminate door-to-door mail delivery and the plan already implemented to hike postage rates. The petitioners also draw the attention of the House to the fact that the elimination of door-to-door mail delivery will have an adverse impact on seniors and the disabled in particular.

The petitioners therefore call upon the Government of Canada to reject Canada Post's plan to cut mail services and increase prices and, instead, explore other opportunities to modernize our postal service.

Government Orders

ROUGE NATIONAL PARK

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to deposit a petition on the Rouge National Park.

My constituency is home to the largest part of the current Rouge National Park and the 100 square kilometre public land assembly surrounding the Rouge River and Duffins Creek. Watersheds in Toronto, Markham, and Pickering are publicly owned federal, provincial, and municipal land, which is home to the endangered Carolinian forest and mixed woodland/plain life zones. It is also the ancestral home of the Mississauga, Huron-Wendat, and Seneca first nations and their sacred burial grounds and village sites.

The petitioners are asking that the Government of Canada protect the irreplaceable 100 square kilometres of public land assembly within a healthy and sustainable Rouge National Park and ensure that the Government of Canada conducts a rational, scientific, and transparent public planning process to create Rouge National Park's boundaries, legislation, and strategic plan, and to include the first nations and Friends of the Rouge Watershed on a Rouge National Park planning and advisory board.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition that denounces the cuts made at Canada Post. The petitioners, who are from my riding, Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, are denouncing the elimination of door-to-door delivery and the increase in the price of stamps.

[*English*]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the residents of the riding of Davenport in the great city of Toronto.

This petition is signed by members of my community from Hope Street, Nairn Avenue, Bartlett Avenue, and Lansdowne Avenue. The petitioners are largely seniors and folks on fixed income, people who do not necessarily use computers.

The petitioners call upon the government to act on pay-to-pay fees. These are the fees that many companies charge consumers to receive their bill in the mail. Imagine that. People in this country are paying money to get their bill in the mail.

This petition seeks government action on that.

● (1240)

INTERNSHIPS

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have is from folks in my riding who want the government to act on protecting unpaid interns. Currently, there are no federal rules that govern this issue.

The petitioners call upon the government to support a national urban workers strategy.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a member of my community, Oscar Vigil, is facing deportation by the Government of Canada. Oscar came to Canada in 2001 from El Salvador. His wife and three children are Canadian citizens.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to grant ministerial relief for Oscar Vigil and allow him to remain in Canada with his family as a permanent resident.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition is from a number of Londoners who still suffer grave concern and are very unhappy about the recent deaths of three folks in the London area who were seeking permanent residency in Canada.

The petitioners believe that because of recent cuts to public service jobs, reduced staff levels have increased work loads and made it very difficult for the department to do its work in regard to citizenship and immigration.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to ensure that the Department of Citizenship and Immigration is properly staffed and resourced in order to reach decisions on applications in a fair and timely manner and ensure that immigration officials consider all factors regarding an individual application, including humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

ENERGY SAFETY AND SECURITY ACT

BILL C-22—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-22, An Act respecting Canada's offshore oil and gas operations, enacting the Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act, repealing the Nuclear Liability Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and

at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration of the second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

Government Orders

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who may wish to ask questions to rise in their places so the Chair has some idea of how many wish to participate in the question period.

Questions, the hon. opposition House leader.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is another sad moment in Parliament. This is the 66th time that this government has used time allocation or closure in Parliament. In the past, the Conservatives complained about the corrupt Liberals imposing a record number of time allocation and closure motions, but the Conservatives have since broken that record. This is the 66th time they have used time allocation.

[English]

Here is why this is again not a very intelligent move, because we are talking about a bill about which the government has unfortunately not been able to bring good, solid legislation into the House. I can recall in 2008, Conservatives brought forward Bill C-15, and they were so embarrassed by the bill because it was so poorly drafted that they sat on it for three years. They never brought it forward. Bill C-15 went right through 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011. Now they have introduced what they hope to be a better bill, a bill that does have some very positive aspects to it—there is no doubt—but a bill that has also raised some very serious questions.

Like Bill C-15, which they sat on for three years, they have been sitting on this, refusing to bring it to Parliament for debate for months. The issue is that we have a bill that has some flaws and also has some good things, and we certainly support the principle of the bill, but in the scant minutes of debate that the government has accorded so far, only a handful of members of Parliament have been able to speak and have been raising those questions.

Why has the government refused to bring it forward for debate? Why is the government so intent on refusing the types of amendments that need to be brought in to amend the bill? Why, for 66 times, has the government been running roughshod over parliamentary rights and democratic debate in the House?

• (1245)

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question. In fact, we are not limiting debate. We have had a significant amount of debate at this stage with respect to this piece of legislation. As the member knows, we are at second reading now. Then the bill goes to committee. Then it returns back to the House for further debate.

Therefore, I am unclear why he thinks we are limiting debate. Canadians have given us a strong mandate to focus on creating jobs and economic growth and, at the same time, putting in pieces of legislation, whether it is this particular one or in the context of our measures around world-class pipeline safety or marine safety to ensure that we have the right pieces of legislation in place for the

health and safety of our communities and the protection of the environment.

Canadians expect our government to make decisions, to take action on our commitments, and that is what our government has done and is doing in the House of Commons in the context of this debate right now.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, and for the 66th time in the House of Commons, we have seen the majority Conservative government's new approach to dealing with process inside the House. It is quite disappointing. What we have is a majority Conservative government that uses its majority to limit the debate inside the House.

Past government House leaders, both in opposition and government, have always recognized that there is a responsibility to sit down and negotiate in good faith so that the bills that are quite controversial get more debate than those bills that might not be as controversial and that all members will support.

The government has not been able to negotiate any sort of agreement regarding an appropriate passage of legislation through the chamber. It is, unfortunately, dependent on using time allocation, which is closure. The government does not like to use that word, but let there be no doubt that it is closure.

My question for the government House leader is this. Why, ever since the Conservatives achieved a majority government, have we seen this change in attitude from the Prime Minister's Office, which says that the only way we can pass legislation in the House of Commons is through closure? It is a sad day for the chamber. It is a sad day for all Canadians.

My question for the government House leader is: Why?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I cannot possibly answer that with as many words as the member has put forward. However, I can say that we are not limiting debate. In fact, we have had a significant amount of debate at this stage. I was here, speaking to this bill previously.

As the member knows, we are at second reading now, as I said before. The bill then goes to the committee and it returns to the House for further debate. I am unclear why he thinks this is limiting debate, but I can tell him that we will continue to keep our commitments to Canadians, introducing and advancing important legislation like the bill we are talking about today.

I look forward to debating this important piece of legislation, being here and being present, discussing it with all of our colleagues, having studied it in committee with parliamentarians hearing from expert witnesses.

Of course, the purpose of time allocation is to ensure that adequate time is allocated for further debate and consideration of the bill. That is the exercise we are going through right now.

Government Orders

• (1250)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, up is down and down is up in this place today. It is either time allocation or it is not time allocation. It is either closure or it is not. If it is not closure, we should be debating the bill, but we are not, because the government has invoked time allocation. This is what is happening, and it has happened time and time again in this place.

When I first arrived here, the government moved a time allocation motion on a bill that it said we had debated in the House in a previous Parliament. That was the government's justification for that time allocation.

There is no justification for this, except to mute debate, to limit the legitimate voices of opposition members—and Canadians—who want to participate in the right process of democracy in this place. That is something the government shows it has little respect for, time and time again.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if I heard a question in there, but I will take this opportunity to speak more specifically to this bill.

There is no question that this is a pressing and substantial piece of legislation. It is consistent with our approach to responsible resource development, which as I said earlier, aims to increase jobs and economic growth opportunities for regions across Canada. It would ensure that the energy sector has safe and secure policy and legislation in place to protect the health of our communities and to protect the environment for all Canadians.

These measures, which are contained in this bill, would build on a sound system overseen by strong regulators to ensure world-class standards for Canada's offshore and nuclear industries. Obviously, we have had some good debate on this already. Our exercise now is to continue that debate. It will go for some time today. At that point, it will have a chance to go back to committee, where committee members are enthusiastic about further expert witnesses and participation from stakeholders on it. After that, we will bring it back here for further debate.

This is all good news. In this sense, today's exercise will ensure that parliamentarians have the opportunity they need to discuss and debate this, both here in the House of Commons and at the standing committee.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister is unaware that the closure motions, this being the 66th one, have the effect of depriving members of Parliament from adequately debating the bill. Particularly for smaller parties in this place and independent members of Parliament, the rotations on limitations like five more hours at second reading mean it is extremely unlikely for me to put forward the concerns I have at second reading, unless the Conservatives want to give me one of their 10-minute speaking spots, which I will gladly take.

I actually have had questions on the order paper. They are now answered. They confirm that the \$1 billion liability could be removed. The Conservatives could remove the cap altogether without having any impact on provincial electricity rates, which has been one of the arguments used for keeping the cap. Also found in the response to the question on the order paper is that they have

estimated that the risks of a large-scale nuclear accident would reach \$100 million. We know what happened in Fukushima, Japan and \$100 million as an estimate of loss is completely out of the realm of real estimates of a catastrophic accident. Then in the response to the question, they do go on to say, "The limit is not meant to address a catastrophic loss involving loss of containment".

We need a lot more time to debate the bill so we find out why the regulator has decided not to address a catastrophic loss involving loss of containment. That is exactly the kind of nuclear accident for which Canadians want to know the operators are fully responsible.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question and commentary. I can assure her that I have a full appreciation and understanding of the processes that take place in the House. I take great pride in my previous capacity as a parliamentary secretary and now as a minister, to be aware of those. I thank her for giving me an opportunity by way of her question to respond to that matter.

With respect to any questions and comments the member has to the substantive dimensions of this debate on the nuclear liability piece, the Government of Canada is bringing forward a modernized nuclear civil liability legislation that would bring the absolute liability of operators of nuclear facilities up to \$1 billion. This is being done to be in line with other levels in other peer jurisdictions. There is an important emphasis on the word "peer" for those who may understand that, obviously with respect to countries that are engaged in similar activities. The legislation would also broaden the number of categories for which compensation may be sought and improve the procedures for delivering those compensations.

• (1255)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege this morning of being in committee and hearing the Minister of Natural Resources address our committee about what his priorities were. We were told that the government had been clear that projects would not proceed unless and until it had been proven safe for workers, communities and the environment.

If nuclear and offshore oil and gas are so safe, why would we have to put any kind of liability requirement on it? We know and it is known around the world not to be safe. Serious questions have been raised in the community, particularly post-Fukushima and post-BP spill in the Gulf of Mexico, that the limits the government is imposing on liability fall far below the amounts of liability. Essentially what the government is saying is that the industry should go ahead, that it will limit its liability and that the public of Canada will cover it.

What is reprehensible is not so much that the Conservatives have limited debate in this place, but we are fast-tracking the review in committee before we even have the bill. There will only be two meetings to debate this. We will have probably two hours to talk to experts in these huge areas. The public will not have the opportunity to participate because these hearings will not go out to the public, to the coastal communities, to the Arctic coast and to the communities adjacent to the nuclear facilities, including the proposed waste management facilities.

Government Orders

The only place where the public would have an opportunity to hear the issues, and we the members of this place can raise the concerns that members of the public raise with us, is here. The Conservatives in their wisdom have decided they do not want to hear those concerns.

Why does the minister not want to hear from members of Parliament and why does he not want to hear from Canadians about their concerns with the potential far too limited liability?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question. I have had a chance to work with her closely on other standing committees. She may be one of the best at packing 12 questions into one. I will try to deal with the number of issues she has raised and perhaps opportunities.

I get the sense from the way she put that question that she may be on a treadmill to provide energy for her own home. She seems to suggest that there are no other forms of energy that she would like to see in Canada. That would not be consistent with our record in Canada. More than 78% of our domestic energy is produced from non-emitting sources. It would not fairly reflect the dynamic supply potential that Canada has for energy and the safe way with which and by which they are delivered.

There are important elements of that. Obviously safety is the key. Safety addresses prevention, preparedness and response. To get to the finer point of her question of liability, liability is there for the penultimate purpose of providing that extra set of circumstances, as rare and remote as they might be, that protects Canadians.

First, with respect to nuclear liability and compensation, the government has taken into consideration, among other things, an amount that, in three regards, is sufficient to deal with the consequences of controlled releases of radiation.

Second, it is within the capacity of insurers to provide insurance at a reasonable cost.

Finally, it is in line with modern liability limits in other countries. Therefore, this amount would also put Canada's liability notably among the highest internationally. We are proud of that record.

After my visit to Rome, we were pleased to see that countries were looking to us as a model and a world leader when it came to the safety with which we produced and transported various forms of energy at home and for the purposes of energy supply abroad.

• (1300)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to what the minister said earlier, which was that we have had a good, wholesome, sufficient debate in the House. I wanted to clarify this for the minister. Maybe he is a little confused because we have had debate in the House on this bill at this stage only on one occasion, which was on March 25.

Therefore, my question for the minister is along the lines of why the hurry now. If the Conservatives wanted to ensure that the debate occurred in the House, then they had the opportunity to bring it back the next day. If they felt that it was an important and pressing matter that needed to be dealt with expeditiously, then they had the opportunity to bring the bill back into the House for debate the next

day, or the day after, or the week after, even the month after, but they did not. Therefore, why the hurry today? What is the hurry now?

I am the closest New Democrat member of Parliament to the Pickering nuclear plant and I do not get a chance to speak to this bill. Therefore, my constituents in Scarborough do not get a chance to have a voice in the House on this bill because I probably will not be able to speak to it. Once again, the government is moving time allocation for, if I remember what my House leader said, the 66th time, breaking every record there is in the history of Parliament.

What is the hurry now? He had months to bring it up for debate. I would like him to tell all of us and Canadians why the hurry now.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, the member is almost as good as the member for Edmonton—Strathcona. Let me address a couple of the issues.

First, I appreciate her question. I am not so sure, in the context of this debate or normal relations, I appreciate the condescending tone with which it was delivered. I am not confused about this. I can assure her that if she wants to have a speaking place, she should speak with the House leader for her party. I am sure, given the member's proximity to Pickering, he would be more than happy to accommodate for that.

However, I do know this. Canadians expect their government to make decisions and to take action on its commitments. That is exactly what we are doing here in the context of offshore activities and nuclear liability. We are going to continue to keep our commitment to Canadians by introducing and advancing important legislation.

It is quite timely that we are here having these debates around this legislation because it is consistent with actions we have taken quite recently in other areas of energy production, energy infrastructure and energy transportation.

I look forward to not only debating this important legislation today and having it studied at the committee by parliamentarians, but also taking into account and accommodation, the contributions of expert witnesses in that process.

The purpose of time allocation for this debate is to ensure that adequate time is allocated for further debate and consideration of a bill, but of this bill.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians also expect parliamentarians to do a proper review of legislation, to have the time in the House to debate the issues properly, to have the time at committee to have the witnesses in so it can do an adequate job. They also expect that proposals and amendments from opposition parties be considered as well. That is not happening under the government on most legislation. Maybe it will under the current minister. We know he is new. He is quite excited about getting legislation into the House. I would think he would want to see it given more time so he could profile all the good things he claims to be doing with the legislation.

Would that not be a better approach rather than, for the 66th time, the government implementing closure on this legislation?

Government Orders

I would like to see a new minister turn over a new leaf and allow Parliament to function as it should

● (1305)

Hon. Greg Rickford: I guess turning over a new leaf is important, Mr. Speaker. It may not change my opinion of certain things that are important to my constituents, like what is in the bill, like a position on another important issue such as the gun registry.

I know the member opposite, coming from his particular riding, is keen to understand, to debate and to be assured that the proposed measures would strengthen incident prevention, response capability, operator accountability and transparency, particularly with respect to the offshore component for some geographical relevance, among other changes. This new legislation would enshrine in the statute of the principal polluter pays. Oil and gas companies operating in the Atlantic and Arctic offshore would be subject to the strictest liability in the world. Liability for the environmental costs and third party losses from spills would be absolute and up to \$1 billion.

We are having this debate. I look forward to this moving on to the next step. The member's participation in the committee's important work would help ensure for him and his constituents that this government is on the right track when it comes to this legislation.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister has to do with some simple math. I am talking about extending this debate for only another five hours. He knows, with the rotations that take place, that means no more than five more New Democrats will get to speak. The last three of us who stood are all people waiting to speak. I suggest we should ask somebody else for a place. That is exactly the problem with time allocation. There is no place to ask for that because we want to speak to this bill.

It also undervalues the diversity of our country. The member for Scarborough—Rouge River wants to talk about nuclear liability because she is near Pickering. I represent Vancouver Island.

We are talking about maritime liability being set at \$1 billion. We now have major pipeline projects coming forward on the coast. Is this a parallel for those? Every day tankers the same size of the *Exxon Valdez* will go by Victoria. Twenty-five years ago that spill cost \$4.5 billion to clean up. I have some important points I would like to raise from the perspective of the west coast.

How does the member think we can accommodate the diversity of our country when he leaves only five spaces for the New Democrats in this important debate?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Again, Mr. Speaker, I am quite hopeful, knowing the House Leader of the Opposition, as I do, as the completely accommodating gentleman he is, that he is going to see to it that NDP members who have some specific concerns have an opportunity to speak to this bill. I am sure that his twitching arm means that he is excited to get them on the roster.

That notwithstanding, the member raised a really good point in his question. It was along the lines of alignment with respect to liability on a couple of key measures, some of them relevant to his riding. I have lived in Langford. In fact, I have been back and forth to British Columbia over the past three weeks. People are talking with a great deal of enthusiasm and excitement about the pieces Canada is

putting in place to ensure that the safety, preparedness, prevention, and liability regimes are in place for these dynamic energy, transportation, and infrastructure requirements coming forward from the British Columbia government, for example, with respect to LNG, and their implications for pipeline safety and shipping.

There has been tremendous enthusiasm from my British Columbia ministers. They are looking forward to this as it pertains to offshore and tanker safety and liability limits. I know that they are looking forward to support from NDP members from British Columbia on these important points. We will be curious to see which way they stand in this place on those issues, because of course, British Columbians are depending on their federal parliamentarians to represent their interests in responsible resource development that puts a particular focus on environmental protection and the economic opportunities that go along with energy production, transportation, and infrastructure.

● (1310)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, New Democrats do not represent the government yet, but on October 19, 2015, this will be the government side of the House. There is no doubt.

What the minister just said is, I think, quite disingenuous. There were two very good questions from the members for Scarborough—Rouge River and Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, both of them saying that it is a real problem when 280 members of Parliament are cut off from being able to speak to a bill. It is not up to the minister to then say that the Conservatives will let a few of them speak, and somehow that makes it okay. This particular time allocation motion shuts 280 members of Parliament out of the debate on what the minister admits is a very important subject.

The Conservatives do not seem to want to speak to these issues or any others. They just do not seem to represent their constituents. However, New Democrats actually care about the quality of the legislation we bring forward and its impact on the lives of Canadians. How can the minister accept that 280 members of Parliament are being denied their ability to speak on behalf of their constituents on this bill and to offer improvements so that the bill can be fixed, unlike Bill C-15, which languished for three years until the government dumped it? How can he shut 280 members of Parliament out of this important debate?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, our government has faced continued attempts by the opposition to delay and obstruct these important bills.

My reference in a previous question to government was the B.C. government. The member knows that. Any capacity New Democrats have to understand how government works would be for them to actually support what British Columbians and the British Columbia government is looking at right now, which is to ensure, for the benefit of folks in that beautiful province and for Canadians across the country from coast to coast to coast, that they have the right pieces of legislation in place when it comes to energy as a general matter, and then as we advance debate and discussion, the specific types of legislation.

Canadians then expect their government to make decisions and take action on our commitments. That is what our government has done with this particular piece of legislation. I look forward to this process continuing, including today, with debate, the important activities that will occur at the standing committee, and then a return to the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The 30 minutes for debate has expired. Consequently, the question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 156*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bezan
Blaney	Bloch
Boughen	Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Crockatt	Daniel

Davidson
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Galipeau
Glover
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hoback
James
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Oliver
O'Toole
Poilievre
Rajotte
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shiple
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 137

Government Orders

Dechert
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Falk
Fast
Fletcher
Gill
Goguen
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leef
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
Menegakis
Miller

Norlock
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
Payne
Preston
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to

Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Atamanenko
Aubin	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Boivin	Borg
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Caron
Casey	Cash
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Eyking	Fortin
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguié
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)

Statements by Members

Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Péclet
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Turmel	Valeriotte — 106

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

I also wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, government orders will be extended for 30 minutes.

The hon. Chief Government Whip is rising on a point of order.

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I request that we see the clock at two o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to see the clock at two o'clock?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The member does not have unanimous consent.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vancouver South.

SECOND READING

The House resumed from March 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act respecting Canada's offshore oil and gas operations, enacting the Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act, repealing the Nuclear Liability Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour to be speaking in front of this learned House today. I understand that we are speaking on Bill C-22. As we know, Bill C-22 is the energy safety and security act. This bill would enhance environmental protection. It is part of our responsible resource development plan. Our Conservative government has been clear that

the development of our natural resources will only proceed if it is safe for Canadians and for the environment.

Over the past year, our Conservative government has initiated a series of new measures to ensure that the development of our natural resources offshore is balanced with the protection of the environment. For example, we have already taken major steps toward enhancing the environmental protection of Canada's maritime domain through an increased number of tanker inspections, mandatory use of double-hulled ships, and improved navigation tools and surveillance offshore.

Our Conservative government has worked closely with the governments of the Atlantic provinces, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, to ensure that Canada's offshore oil and gas regime remains world class. In each province, offshore oil and gas projects are closely and jointly managed by the federal-provincial offshore boards, namely the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board and the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board.

Bill C-22, the proposed energy safety and security act, would build on this work and provide world-class—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I regret that I must cut off the member for Vancouver South, but she will have 18 minutes to resume with her remarks following question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

WRECK OF THE *EMPRESS OF IRELAND*

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the big ship had left Pointe-au-Père and had just begun its long journey to Liverpool, England.

The passengers were ordinary people. Of the 1,057 passengers on board, 717 were travelling in third class. There were also 420 crew members.

Fog rose off the St. Lawrence in the middle of the night. There were two large ships: an ocean liner, the *Empress of Ireland* and a coal ship, the *Storstad*.

In fog so thick you could cut it with a knife, the two ships did all they could to try to avoid a collision, but they finally collided off the coast of Sainte-Luce.

The *Storstad* rammed into the *Empress of Ireland's* side. The captain of the coal ship reversed the engines to prevent the worst, but this manoeuvre had the opposite effect. As the *Storstad* reversed, water quickly poured into the breach.

The *Empress of Ireland* tipped onto its starboard side and sunk within 14 minutes.

Statements by Members

One hundred years ago today, off the coast of Sainte-Luce, 1,102 people lost their lives when the *Empress of Ireland* sank.

Today, it is with great emotion that we remember the victims of this shipwreck, as well as all those who helped and welcomed the survivors.

* * *

[English]

TD SCHOLARSHIP FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to congratulate Miss Freya Kellet, a scholar from Okanagan Mission Secondary School in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country, who this week in Ottawa was awarded a national TD scholarship for community leadership.

TD scholarships for community leadership are awarded to students in their final year of high school who demonstrate consistent and outstanding dedication to making their communities a better place.

Freya's passion for food security and environmental issues, raising awareness about cyberbullying and social media, along with her commitment to volunteerism and to helping disabled children, all helped to not only make our community a better place but also motivated others to get involved.

Freya is an inspiration. We wish her all the best of success as she pursues her educational goals in corporate social responsibility and international development law. She has made her family and friends very proud and is no doubt destined to be a true leader. Our congratulations to Freya. We wish her all the best in her future.

* * *

ALISTAIR MACLEOD

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month we lost a great Canadian writer, Alistair MacLeod. Although he was known primarily as a master of the short story, he won critical acclaim for his masterpiece, *No Great Mischief*, one of Canada's greatest novels.

An Order of Canada recipient and winner of the prestigious 2001 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, his contribution to Canada's literary lexicon was profound. Of equal measure was his passion for educating Canada's youth. Legions of students loved his creative writing classes during his three decades at the University of Windsor. A generation of talented writers graduated imbued with his love of language, his use of metaphor, the importance he placed on creating unforgettable characters, and his passion for the land and its resilient inhabitants. He was their inspiration. He was approachable, dedicated to their education, and willing to give them fatherly advice on how to become great writers.

My favourite line from *No Great Mischief* truly captured Alistair when he said, "All of us are better when we're loved".

On behalf of my constituents, members of Parliament and all Canadians, we extend our sincerest condolences to his wife Anita, his six children, and his large extended family. Our loss of Alistair will be deeply felt by all.

TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2016, Trinity Western University will open the first private, faith-based law school in Canada. Canadians were shocked to hear that the law societies in Ontario and Nova Scotia voted not to certify Trinity's law graduates for practice in their province. The reason is not because of Trinity's highly respected academic standards. No, these law societies voted against Trinity because they did not like Trinity's Christian code of conduct for students who choose to attend.

This is a dangerous attack on religious freedoms in Canada, and it affects us all. Canada is a country known for human rights and religious freedom. The intolerance demonstrated by these law societies tarnishes Canada's international reputation, making it hypocritical for Canada to speak out internationally when our own religious freedoms are under attack from within.

I call upon the Ontario and Nova Scotia law societies to do the right thing and stop their attack on our religious freedoms.

* * *

● (1405)

ROLAND LARKIN

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I recognize Roland Larkin, who recently passed away.

Rollie and his wife Yvonne raised seven children in New Glasgow, P.E.I. Family and faith were the main two pillars in his life.

A true business entrepreneur, in 1969 he and Yvonne built Chez Yvonne's Restaurant in Cavendish. Today it is still family owned and operated.

He went on to buy a dairy farm in New Glasgow, now the foundation of Larkin Brothers Inc.

While working at the New Glasgow Dairy with his dad, he went to Guelph College to perfect his butter-making skills. Later he purchased the New Glasgow Dairy and eventually the New Glasgow Feed Mill and the country store. That is economic development.

Rollie was a founding member of the New Glasgow Fire Hall and the Junior Farmers Hall. He was active in such organizations as St. Ann's parish church, St. Ann's lobster supper, the P.E.I. Restaurant Association, and the Prince Edward Island Standardbred Horse Owners Association, yet he found time to serve as a hockey coach and referee.

On behalf of the House, we thank Roland Larkin for his dedication and contribution to his community, to P.E.I., and to Canada.

*Statements by Members***BURLINGTON CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate Burlington's 2013 Citizen of the Year, Ms. Jean Longfield.

Jean has positively impacted the lives of thousands of people through her Gift of Giving Back program.

Beginning in 2007, the annual food drive program has collected more than 770,000 pounds of food with a collective value of more than \$1.9 million to help the less fortunate in Burlington. Through Jean's leadership, the Salvation Army, the Carpenter Hospice, Partnership West Food Bank, and Halton Women's Place have all benefited from her food drive.

Jean has inspired and engaged thousands of Burlington minor hockey players, students, and parents. Jean and her minor hockey food drive program were even featured this year on *Hockey Night in Canada*.

Congratulations to Jean Longfield, a great leader in our community and a great Canadian.

* * *

VETERANS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to thank those who truly care about our veterans.

On Saturday, local volunteers led by Sean Wilson of the Remember November 11 Association and Barry Sandler, with support from the Veterans Memorial Parkway community project along with area cadets and students, will plant our own Flanders Field in my riding of London—Fanshawe to commemorate the 100th anniversary of World War I.

The poppy field adjacent to Veterans Memorial Parkway has been prepared for the planting of thousands of poppies. The parkway, with its magnificent monuments dedicated to fortitude, valour, courage, and freedom, also has flags and memorial trees, and there are plans to install up to 900 additional trees in a new park to honour our veterans. The poppy garden will help to make this living monument complete.

I am grateful to those who generously, selflessly, and genuinely give their time, without fanfare, to create a lasting tribute to our veterans.

* * *

ESSEX PELEE ISLAND COAST WINEMAKING

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, local wineries owned the podium at the 2014 All Canadian Wine Championships.

With fewer overall medals awarded this year and a field of 200 competitors from across Canada, wines from EPIC, the Essex Pelee Island Coast, took home 20 medals, including prestigious double golds for Colio and Viewpointe Estate wines.

EPIC is Canada's first and oldest wine region, dating back to 1866, and as the litany of medals attests, it is Canada's best.

In the spirit of good-natured fun in this place, I understand from some of my colleagues from B.C., Nova Scotia, Quebec, and someplace called Niagara that these areas claim to make something akin to wine, so I invite these colleagues and all Canadians, whether by historic trolley ride or at the 10th annual Shores of Erie International Wine Festival to spend some summertime fun in EPIC wine country and uncork their passion for great award-winning wines.

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● (1410)

UKRAINE

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday Ukraine held presidential elections to determine a democratic future in which the rule of law and respect for human rights prevail.

I am honoured to have travelled to Ukraine as an election observer.

My riding of Elmwood—Transcona is home to thousands of people of Ukrainian descent, and I am proud that our government has taken a principled stand in the international community to support efforts to help restore stability and prosperity in Ukraine.

We who care deeply about Ukraine remain engaged. We stand with the people of Ukraine because they deserve a government that represents their interests and is accountable to the people.

Throughout this mission I witnessed a renewed energy and optimism. People from all walks of life and from all parts of the country are taking ownership of their future. They came out to vote to determine a better future for themselves and their families.

I congratulate President Poroshenko on his election and I look forward to him engaging at home and with international partners to ensure the political and economic stability of Ukraine.

* * *

[Translation]

FIGHT AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week I visited organizations that fight homelessness, and I would like to convey their concerns about the refocusing of the homelessness partnering strategy, the HPS.

The Café de rue de Terrebonne is a shelter for homeless and marginalized youth. It is also a place where young people can get help, such as emergency food assistance. Without funding, the organization will be forced to close its doors next year. If that happens, none of those young people will be able to get the help they need to keep themselves fed and off the streets.

Hébergement d'urgence Terrebonne will soon be forced to cut back its services because it will lose HPS funding. That will hurt the most vulnerable members of our community, and our whole region will suffer as a result.

Statements by Members

As the member for Terrebonne—Blainville, I am deeply concerned about the government's decision. Abandoning the organizations that are working to prevent homelessness will have serious consequences for our communities.

I am asking the government to maintain current funding so that organizations can keep providing vital services in the fight against homelessness.

* * *

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS IN SUDAN

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to be deeply concerned with the case of Mariam Yahia Ibrahim Ishag.

Meriam was sentenced to 100 lashes for adultery and to death for apostasy. This harsh and cruel sentencing calls into question Sudan's adherence and commitment to international human rights. Furthermore, freedom of religion is enshrined in Sudan's Constitution.

Our government urges the Sudanese government to uphold its own laws and international obligations. The Sudanese government must act to protect the right to freedom of religion, including the freedom to choose one's own faith and to practise it in peace and security.

* * *

[Translation]

WRECK OF THE *EMPRESS OF IRELAND*

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on May 28, 1914, at 4:30 p.m., the *Empress of Ireland* set sail from the port of Quebec City, bound for Liverpool.

At exactly the same time, a Norwegian collier, the *Storstad*, was heading up the St. Lawrence River carrying cargo for Montreal. At about 1:40 a.m., the lookout on the *Empress of Ireland* signaled the presence of *Storstad* in the distance. As the *Empress of Ireland* sailed past Rimouski, a thick fog rolled in suddenly.

At 1:55 a.m., the *Storstad* rammed into the side of the *Empress of Ireland* and the freezing water of the St. Lawrence rushed in. Within 14 minutes, it was all over. Of the 1477 passengers and crew members, 1,012 died. Only four of the 138 children on board survived the tragedy.

The Site historique maritime de la Pointe-au-Père this week commemorates the sinking of the *Empress of Ireland*, with several dozens of the survivors' descendants in attendance. The Canadian Museum of History, in Gatineau, is also launching today an exhibition entitled "Canada's Titanic".

Hollywood has not made a film about the sinking of the *Empress of Ireland*. It probably never will. However, we can and we must keep the memory of the victims alive on this 100th anniversary of the tragedy.

[English]

VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was pleased to attend Canada's premier defence show, CANSEC, where our government was happy to welcome yet another partner to the hire a veteran program.

The Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries will encourage its membership to give veterans greater access to job opportunities. This partnership is truly win-win. It will give veterans priority hiring in over 900 companies throughout Canada's defence, aerospace, and security industries while providing the same industry with access to a pool of highly qualified veterans with the skills, leadership, and experience to excel in this sector.

Our government appreciates the commitment made by the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries to support Canada's veterans embarking on new opportunities.

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● (1415)

[Translation]

PROVINCIAL DAY OF FRANCOPHONIE IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we pay tribute to the francophone community in Newfoundland, which will celebrate the Provincial Day of Francophonie tomorrow. We salute this community for its tenacity in the face of adversity.

Many centuries ago, fishers came over from Saint-Malo, France, and landed on the shores of the island and the continent. The French names these fishers gave to this new-found land are still part of the landscape. From the farthest reaches of Labrador to the shores of the Port-au-Port peninsula, French culture lives on through struggle after struggle. Franco-Newfoundlanders look out on the edge of the continent from this island, which is a beacon of our hope.

If Canada's francophone community is to survive, we need to plant our roots, not only in Anse-à-Canards or St. John's, but also in the hearts of all Canadians with ties to this language that has survived through waves and storms.

* * *

[English]

MATERNAL, NEWBORN, AND CHILD HEALTH

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, under the maternal, newborn, and child health project, our Prime Minister is hosting a Saving Every Woman, Every Child: Within Arm's Reach summit.

The summit will bring together Canadian and international experts from all over the world to accelerate efforts on maternal, newborn, and child health.

I recently announced in Calgary a project that will bring life-saving health services to mothers and children in remote communities of South Sudan. These projects will be spearheaded by the Canadian Red Cross.

Oral Questions

Let me now talk about the results. Globally over 700,000 more children lived to their fifth birthday in 2011 than in 2010. In over 125 countries, maternal death rates have declined sharply in the past five years. Between 2010 and 2013, an estimated two million deaths from disease have been prevented.

Canadians can be proud of the government's record in this important area.

* * *

[Translation]

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to development assistance priorities, women's and children's health is certainly high on the list.

Yes, I said "women's health", not just "maternal health". Women are women before they become mothers, and some women are healthier if they do not have children. International aid must focus on the full range of sexual and reproductive rights, not just those that are ideologically acceptable to the Conservatives.

That means funding access to safe abortion services. Women's and children's health is not limited to just that. Health also means improving access to education for both women and children. However, women's health also includes educating men. Too many women and children who are forced into marriage will become pregnant before they are physically or psychologically ready. Women's and children's health also means improving access to safe drinking water, electricity and decent housing.

The NDP cares deeply about the health of women and children around the world. That is why women's health should be about more than just maternal health.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know the Liberal leader wants to increase the drug trade, but we do not hear anything from the Liberals on international trade.

Let us talk about the Liberal record on trade. In 13 years, the Liberals inked trade agreements with three countries. Our Conservative government has signed and concluded agreements with 38 countries.

Liberals led massive photo ops they called Team Canada missions, with no evidence of success. The Minister of International Trade leads sector-focused missions with small and medium-sized enterprises, providing them with the support they need to succeed.

In fact, the Liberal International trade critic, the member for Toronto Centre, is not even a member of the international trade committee. Since she was appointed critic, she has missed 39 hours of testimony and some 68 witnesses. She has never even asked the Minister of International Trade a question in this House.

Our government knows that when we trade, we create jobs. Trade and jobs are not a priority for the Liberal leader or his economic advisers.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in spite of warnings from the opposition, the Prime Minister appointed Daniel Therrien as privacy commissioner. An officer of Parliament should not be judging the policies he developed, especially when they are controversial ones, such as the security perimeter policy.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada was very critical of this measure, so why did the Prime Minister appoint one of the negotiators of this initiative to head this office?

• (1420)

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Therrien is a well-qualified candidate who would bring significant experience in law and privacy issues to the position. This appointment was made following a rigorous process that identified Mr. Therrien as the best candidate. According to the NDP, having actual experience working on privacy issues in government somehow makes someone less qualified to be privacy commissioner.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives were caught misusing the Communications Security Establishment. They were caught doing nothing while Canadians saw their privacy breached, and they put forward legislation allowing spying on Canadians based on suspicion alone. Our last privacy watchdog raised alarm bells about the government's privacy policy. Now the Conservatives are replacing her with the person who designed the policy. That is not balanced, so will the Conservatives reconsider this appointment?

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Therrien has more public service in this country than that member and I together. Mr. Therrien, as I said, is a well-qualified candidate who would bring significant experience in law and privacy issues to the position. The appointment was made following a rigorous process that identified Mr. Therrien as the best candidate. According, again, to the NDP, having actual experience working on privacy issues in government somehow makes someone less qualified to be privacy commissioner. I am not sure what else to say.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sadly, the Conservatives' lack of accountability extends to maternal and child health as well. They lecture other countries, but they cannot produce proper statistics about maternal and child health in Canada, and they put ideological restrictions on the funding. Making commitments is a good start, but the real test is whether they follow through and the kind of impact they have. So will the government ensure that there is a full range of family planning options available to these women and girls?

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has taken a leadership role in addressing the health challenges faced by women, newborns, and children in the world's poorest countries. Let me give this member some good results here.

Thanks to Canada's global leadership, over 700,000 more children live to their fifth birthdays in 2011 than in 2010. Let me say that in over 125 countries, maternal death rates have declined sharply in the past five years. Between 2010 and 2013, an estimated two million deaths from disease were prevented. If that is not a good record, then I do not know what the member is talking about.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' ideological stubbornness is appalling. They refuse to contribute to the United Nations Population Fund because the fund supports family planning and reproductive health, which are topics that make their anti-choice friends unhappy. However, 800 women die every day in developing countries as a result of pregnancies, deliveries or botched abortions.

Why do the Conservatives refuse to fund these groups that provide safe and legal treatment, particularly in the case of rape?

[*English*]

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians believe in achieving results, not just in rhetoric, like what the New Democrats are talking about.

Let me say what I just said. At this time, the Prime Minister is in Toronto with other world leaders talking about women's, newborns' and children's health. That initiative has saved the lives of over 1.3 million children and newborns as well as more than 60,000 young mothers. If that is not a result, then I do not know what is.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, promising money is all well and good, but it is even better to ensure that this money is well spent. Four years after the Muskoka announcement, we still do not know how much money was spent or where it was spent.

The Lancet recently criticized the Conservatives' financial opacity. Even the UN is unable to get a full picture of the commitments made in 2010. After the Muskoka boondoggle, how can we believe the Conservatives when they promise more transparency with respect to development assistance?

[*English*]

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me give some facts to my hon. colleague on the other side.

In 2013, the Publish What You Fund Aid Transparency Index placed the former CIDA, now part of DFAIT Canada, eighth among the 67 donor organizations and third among bilateral agencies in meeting their commitments. If that is not the best result for Canada, I do not know what kind of results the NDP is looking for.

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● (1425)

[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the new building Canada fund is a flop.

Most of the provinces and territories will not accept applications until the federal government dispels all doubt and signs umbrella agreements, but the Conservatives have so far refused to do that. In the meantime, an entire construction season has been lost.

How could the minister let so many jobs slip through his fingers?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why is the member deliberately trying to mislead the House?

It is much bigger than that. Once again this year, we will continue to invest \$6 billion in infrastructure across the country. Yes, people everywhere will be complaining all summer long because of government-funded construction projects.

We are proud of the work happening on roads and bridges across the country because we are making it happen.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, municipal infrastructure is vital for middle-class job creation, but under the current government, co-operation with our cities has fallen into a giant pothole. Local officials have begged for repairs to sewers and subway lines, but all the Prime Minister delivers are political lines. Roads are cracking, bridges are rusting, and the Conservatives are using valuable infrastructure money just to buy votes, not steel and tar. Cities know the difference between civil engineering and campaign engineering, but does the Prime Minister?

Oral Questions

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Liberals did nothing on infrastructure for 13 years, making it very difficult to catch up, but we are working on that. We have been delivering since we have been here. It is the longest and the biggest plan ever delivered for this country. We will continue to do that. The municipalities and the provinces know that. We are the best partner they have ever had.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canada's municipalities meet this weekend, there is more dissatisfaction with the building Canada infrastructure funding. It is two months late. The construction season is slipping away. Most local communities still cannot even apply. Some of their priorities, like local roads, have been thrown out. They do not like the feds' arbitrary P3 screen. They are forced to compete for funds against universities. For the next two years, those funds have been chopped by 87%. All of this hurts municipalities, stymies growth, costs jobs, and drains productivity. Why?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these accusations are false. Our government has introduced the longest and the largest infrastructure plan in Canada's history. Our plan is already open for business. In fact, we have already committed funding to a key public transit project in Edmonton. That is already done, and some other municipalities have developed their projects.

The provinces and municipalities can submit their funding applications. For sure I know the member is upset by that, because we are doing things.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in order to reassure its shareholders and Canadians, McDonald's has decided to pay for its own independent audit of its use of the temporary foreign worker program, but the minister refuses to take any responsibility for the mess he has made of this program. While the "hamburglar" acts, Conservative bunglers are putting Canadians out of work and temporary foreign workers at risk.

Will the minister do the right thing and agree to launch an investigation that is independent?

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the temporary foreign worker program is to provide employers with employees when no Canadian is available for the job. We know that there is no general labour shortage across Canada, but what we do have in some sectors and some regions are shortages, so we are going to put measures in place and make changes to the program to make sure that all employers offer Canadians the jobs before they are offered to any temporary foreign worker.

• (1430)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the problems with the temporary foreign worker program is that the government is relying on vulnerable workers to report abuses.

Saskatchewan's minister responsible said that he gets very few complaints. However, things are very different when the approach is proactive. In 2012, surprise inspections showed rates of non-compliance to be 80% and 95% in some industries.

Why is the government refusing to admit that the program needs a major overhaul to protect both Canadian and foreign workers?

[English]

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have made changes to this program to ensure that employers get the workers they need when no Canadian is available. We have also made changes to ensure that employers follow the rules and make sure they offer Canadians the jobs first, but every time we put those changes forward, that member and that party voted against them.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, McDonald's did a little soul-searching. It hired an external firm to examine its operations and make recommendations in relation to abuses of the temporary foreign worker program.

When will the Conservatives face the fact that a comprehensive, independent reform is needed to fix the problem they created?

[English]

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): As I have said, Mr. Speaker, we have reviewed this program. We have made several changes, which those members across the way voted against. We are making sure that Canadians always get the jobs offered to them first, before we bring in temporary foreign workers.

Why does that member and that party not do an independent audit of the taxpayers' money they are spending staffing their campaign offices across the country using funds that are supposed to be spent here in Ottawa?

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): The fact is, Mr. Speaker, for 14 months we have been complaining that temporary foreign workers are building the women's hospital in Winnipeg, even though dozens of Canadian carpenters and labourers have applied for those jobs and have been turned away. I provided the minister with a list of 35 of those names, but now, to add insult to injury, the three Canadian carpenters who did get hired have been laid off, while the temporary foreign workers remain, as we speak, building that project.

Oral Questions

There should not be a single temporary foreign worker on that job if there is a single qualified Canadian available. This guy says there is change being made in the program. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, no change has been made in Winnipeg.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the requirements of this program are laid out. The employers know what they are. They must apply for a labour market opinion before they bring a temporary foreign worker in from another country, and any employer who violates the labour market opinion and the commitment they make to offer the job to Canadians first is held accountable.

One of the measures was to create a blacklist, and anyone who avoided following the rules of the program would have their name added. That member and that party voted against strict regulations like that.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the past, when we asked the Conservatives to provide us with detailed information on the use of the Challenger jets, they gave us a list of ministers who used the planes and the passenger manifest.

However, in response to our most recent question about the use of the Challengers, the Conservatives failed to provide the passenger manifest. They spent \$4 million in five years and they are refusing to tell us which bagmen and party friends travelled with the Prime Minister or the ministers.

Why are the Conservatives choosing to hide that information?

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, we have reduced the use of the Challenger jet by some 80% since coming to office in 2006. In fact, the last year the Liberals were in power, they used the jet for 1,114.7 hours, but the hardest-working cabinet in Canadian history used it last year for only 266 flight hours. We respect taxpayers. That is why we are using the Challengers less and less. In fact, we were able to sell some of the Challengers, because we reduced the use so much.

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives can point fingers at the Liberals, they are responsible for their abuse.

[Translation]

The Conservatives are acting as though, all of a sudden, the list of passengers who travelled on government planes is a state secret.

If they have not done anything wrong and they have nothing to hide, then they need to make the list public. Like the NDP, Canadians suspect that the Conservatives are hiding the passenger manifest because they were doing favours for party friends.

When will they make the passenger manifest public?

● (1435)

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said we have reduced the use of the Challengers by 80%. We are very proud of that because we have the greatest respect for Canadian taxpayers.

The only people who are hiding party cronies are the members of the NDP. They are hiding the fact that they have party cronies working in offices in Montreal, Quebec, and Saskatchewan. They say that they actually work here, in Ottawa, but we know they are actually working in these riding offices that they use taxpayer money illegally to fund. They should stand up, do the right thing, and return the money they have used illegally to fund partisan political offices.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Yes, Mr. Speaker, and that is why we hid the Toronto office in the Toronto Star building.

Let us get back to the latest Conservative scandal. In the good old days—that is, six months ago—the government routinely released the names of those who flew with the Prime Minister. However, after being discovered using the Challenger to fly Conservative friends around, this information is now hidden from Canadians.

Would the Minister of National Defence confirm that flight manifests for the Prime Minister's planes are now considered state secrets?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I love actually repeating this answer over and over again, because it really highlights the fact that this government—how seriously we take taxpayers' money.

We on this side of the House have brought in significant measures to reduce taxes for all Canadians, to reduce the cost of government. That is why we have reduced the use of the Challenger by 80%.

I was very happy to see the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirm the fact that our tax reductions have put thousands of dollars back into the pockets of the lowest-income Canadians.

The only consistent thing is that the NDP consistently votes against all of those measures.

We will stand up for low-income Canadians, we will stand up for middle-income Canadians, and we will continue to create jobs and opportunity for all Canadians.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): There they go again, Mr. Speaker, making things up to distract from their own growing pathetic record of scandal and mismanagement, just like their irresponsible patronage appointments.

Oral Questions

The way the justice minister's friends and former staff got their plum positions at ECBC was wrong.

Conservatives killed the public appointments commission. Conservatives broke their promise to end patronage. Conservatives are acting just like the Liberals. It is David Dingwall all over again: entitled to their entitlements.

Clearly, these appointments should never have happened.

Would the justice minister and his friend John Lynn come to committee and explain this egregious example of pork patronage?

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, Mr. Lynn's appointment as CEO of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation was terminated as of a couple of days ago.

Our expectations for crown corporations, for agencies, and for departments has been and continues to be that they conduct their business with integrity, accountability, and respect for taxpayer dollars.

On the other hand, when will the NDP pay back the taxpayer dollars that it has been abusing all over the country for its own partisan purposes?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the current Minister of Justice was responsible for Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, he appointed one of his friends as the CEO. His henchman wasted no time in offering great jobs, without a competition, to four Conservatives, two of whom are members of the current justice minister's entourage.

The Minister of Justice owes Canadians an explanation. Will he appear before the committee to explain how so many of his friends ended up working for a crown corporation for which he was responsible?

• (1440)

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member had an opportunity just now to stand up and explain to Canadians when they are going to pay back the taxpayer dollars that they have been abusing throughout the country. They are supposed to be used to serve Canadians. They are being used to serve their own partisan purposes.

When are they going to pay the money back?

The Speaker: Order. I think some members are confused with the sequence of events. Supplementals are put after the question has been answered, not during the answer. Answers are to be made after the question has been posed, not during the question. If members could try to keep that in mind, it would certainly help the Chair out.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the government's two blacklists in front of me.

One has zero employers blacklisted, and the other has four. Not one of these is blacklisted for employee abuse.

The minister was clearly wrong yesterday in claiming that companies had been blacklisted for abusing their employees. That is not true.

Does this not make it obvious that the government simply does not care about employee abuse and human trafficking?

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking action against employers who abuse the temporary foreign worker program.

Employment and Social Development Canada has publicly listed several employers suspended from using the program in recent weeks, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada's website clearly states that entire groups of employers—strip clubs, escort services, and massage parlours—are all banned from the temporary foreign worker program.

Unlike the Liberals, our government has taken real action against abuse. In fact, when the Liberals were in power, they helped facilitate the importation of potential victims of human trafficking.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is such a waste of time to argue about facts, especially when I am totally right and he is absolutely wrong.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: This is taking up a great deal of time. The hon. member for Markham—Unionville has not finished asking his question. I would ask members to allow him to do so.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I have in front of me a document from the department saying that four employers were on the blacklist, but all of them are under categories to do with wrong applications for labour market opinions. None of them is under category (c) for abuse of employees.

There is the proof. The Conservatives are wrong, and they do not care about facts. Why do they not care about employee abuse?

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Liberals, our government has cleaned up this widespread misuse of the temporary foreign worker program.

In fact, when the Liberals were in power, they helped facilitate the importation of potential victims of human trafficking. We took action to restrict access to the temporary foreign worker program for strip clubs, escort services, and massage parlours, things the Liberals knew a lot about.

Because of our actions, they are now on the employers watch list. Others are under investigation, and those who abuse the system will

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlottetown.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the process the government used to appoint Justice Nadon was a disaster. In anticipation of Justice LeBel's imminent retirement this fall, can the minister tell us what lessons the government has learned and what process will be used to replace Justice LeBel so that Quebec does not have to go another year without its full contingent of judges on the Supreme Court?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, we took the time to get outside expert legal advice, including advice from former Supreme Court justices.

That advice pointed clearly to the fact that Mr. Justice Nadon was eligible. We proceeded on that advice. Subsequent to that, of course, the Supreme Court has made a ruling. We will respect the spirit and the letter of that ruling.

As I indicated yesterday, I have now had the opportunity to not only speak on the phone with but meet personally with the new Quebec justice minister, Mme. Vallée. We have working collaboratively to come forward with what we think will be a very good choice for the next Supreme Court justice.

* * *

PRIVACY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's appetite for the personal information of Canadians seems never-ending.

It has now been revealed that the Communications Security Establishment Canada is retaining information on the names and email addresses of Canadians for 30 years. This goes far beyond the foreign intelligence mandate of CSEC.

Can the government explain what retaining this information about Canadian citizens has to do with foreign intelligence, or is this really not more about the government building the capacity to track Canadians online?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CSEC is in the business of protecting Canadians from foreign intelligence and protecting us from international terrorists and cyberhackers.

That being said, the activity of CSEC is reviewed every year by the commissioner. Each year, the commissioner has found that it has acted lawfully and has respected Canadian laws and privacy.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, CSEC maintains an information bank containing the personal information of potentially any individual who communicates electronically with a key computer network. This information is saved for 30 years and can be shared with domestic police agencies or foreign bodies.

Can the Minister of National Defence tell us what is meant by a "key computer network"? Can he also tell us with which foreign bodies the information can be shared and whether it can be shared without a warrant?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CSEC is in the business of protecting us from international terrorists, cyberhackers, and kidnappers. Under the law, it must respect the privacy of Canadians and comply with all laws.

I have to point out, again, that the independent commissioner who looks at the activities of CSEC each year has said that it is completely in compliance with Canadian law. The NDP should support organizations like CSEC that are in the business of protecting us.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the issue of RCMP suicides is serious and we must act now.

According to experts, almost one in five officers could attempt to end his or her life. However, the RCMP does not carry out systematic investigations when an officer commits suicide, although there are more police officer deaths by suicide than in the line of duty.

Does the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness have a report on the issue? What is the action plan to help RCMP members in distress?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP plays an important role in keeping Canadians safe. We have put in place measures to keep an even closer watch on the RCMP, through an oversight body. Unfortunately, we have not had the support of the New Democrats.

We will continue to ensure that agencies are in place to oversee the RCMP and ensure that it fulfills its mandate and protects Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister misunderstands the question. What we are asking about here is the level of services to RCMP officers for mental health. It is even falling behind the inadequate levels for the Canadian Forces.

Today, the Assistant Commissioner of the RCMP admitted that 16 suicides of serving RCMP members that occurred in the last 8 years have not been reviewed. Dr. Greg Passey notes that the level of suicides is now greater in the RCMP than in the Canadian Forces.

RCMP officers are only allowed six therapy sessions without higher approval. Will the minister now allow RCMP officers to get additional professional mental health assistance without having to reveal themselves or their conditions to their superiors?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP's role is to ensure that police officers have access to all the mental health programs and services they need. There are programs. We are working with veterans on mental health issues specifically.

We will continue to do so to ensure that we are able to support them and that they can return to their positions or civilian life.

* * *

[English]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian consumers, employers, businessmen, and tradespeople are all part of a national economy and a united country, but for certain sectors, it can be easier to move products or labour overseas than from province to province. For instance, it is well documented that it is easier for Ontario consumers to directly purchase wine from California than from British Columbia.

Internal trade barriers are inefficient. They hurt Canadian federalism and prevent companies from growing. Can the hard-working Minister of Industry please inform the House of what our government is doing to address these costly, inefficient trade barriers?

● (1450)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from the Hudson's Bay Company through FTA, NAFTA, and now to the Canada-Europe free trade agreement, Canada has always been a country of free trade. We have gone from two countries to five. Now there are 43 countries around the world with which we have free trade agreements.

The problem now is that we have more free trade agreements with the world and more liberalized free trade around the world than we have within Canada. The agreement on internal trade within Canada was signed back in 1994. It needs to be rewritten and redrafted for a new era of free trade within Canada.

This summer, we are going to be working with all of my provincial counterparts to ensure that we have a new agreement of free trade within Canada so that Canada's economy will continue to move forward.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has always said that it would support a good trade agreement with the European Union.

The Conservatives told us that the agreement had been signed and that there were only a few details to iron out, but that was a while ago and we are still waiting.

Can the minister tell us what details had to be ironed out and can he tell us why, five months after the agreement was signed, Canadians still do not know more?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were very pleased last October to announce that Canada and the European Union had finalized an agreement in principle for a free trade agreement. That agreement now has to be translated into a legal text, which we expect will comprise of more than 1,000 pages. It takes a lot of work and we want to ensure we get it right.

However, the importance here is that this agreement will open up a market of 500 million consumers to Canadian companies that was not open before.

We are very much looking forward to getting this text in place, and we will certainly table it in the House.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want a good trade deal with Europe, but all we have from the government is delay, secrecy and confusion.

Just this morning in committee, the Minister of International Trade told us that, "All the substantive issues have been resolved" and we are now "converting it into legal text". However, key players are saying that important details, including beef, investment and rules of origin, are still being negotiated.

So what is it? Are the negotiations complete, as the minister told us at committee, or are they not?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty rich for NDP members to stand in the House and claim to be free traders when they have never once stood in the House to support a trade agreement that Canada signed. We have trade agreements with 43 different countries around the world, and never once have they stood to actually support these trade agreements.

On this side of the House, we know that trade and investment are the key drivers of economic growth for our country. On this side of the House, we stand up for the priorities of Canadians, not the special interest groups and big union bosses who the NDP represent.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month, Canada lost more than 30,000 full-time jobs, adding to the more than 1.3 million Canadians looking for work. Yet, the Conservatives have used their budget bill to kill a job-creation measure that over a half million small businesses used just last year. The CFIB has championed this credit as a win-win, as it supports small businesses and helps create the good-paying jobs that Canadians need.

Therefore, will the Conservatives listen to small business owners and the NDP and back off from their plan to kill the small business hiring credit?

Oral Questions

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite seems to have forgotten that the NDP voted against the hiring credit.

This credit was always meant to be temporary. It helped small businesses that were struggling during the worst economic recession since the Great Depression.

We recognize the vital role that small business plays in the economy and job creation, which is why we have frozen EI premiums for three years, putting \$660 million into the pockets of job creators and workers last year alone.

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are hurting SMEs by abolishing the hiring tax credit. Moreover, they are not doing anything about limiting credit card transaction fees. They have essentially abandoned SMEs.

The NDP is proposing meaningful solutions for our SMEs. We have proposed that we partner with them and consult them. That is completely different from what the Conservatives do.

Why do they Conservatives continue to ignore the needs of our real job creators?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hiring credit, which the NDP voted against, was always designed to be temporary assistance for small businesses.

As for credit cards, we have heard the concerns of small businesses and we introduced a code of conduct. This code was welcomed by consumers and industry groups, in particular by small businesses.

We are always listening to small businesses.

* * *

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, chicken farmers have not been reassured by answers from the Minister of Agriculture about the unprecedented imports of spent hens from the United States.

My question then is for the Minister of Public Safety. Why did the CBSA, under the duty relief program, allow 213 million pounds of spent fowl into Canada last year, jeopardizing supply management for chickens and creating worries about fresh poultry from consumers? Will the Minister of Public Safety remove spent fowl from that duty relief list immediately?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it very interesting that the member for Malpeque pulled himself from agricultural files several years ago because the agricultural industries out there did not recognize his brilliance. That continues today.

The question he asked is well in hand. I continue to work with my colleagues at CBSA and finance to find resolution on this file. Chicken farmers are well served by our government. They continue to tell us this, even when they were lobbying here last week.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us return to the question of the hiring practices for Conservative friends. Here is the list: John Lynn, now fired, friend and sailing buddy of the Minister of Justice and a repeat contributor to his campaigns; Nancy Baker, a former political aide to the justice minister while in another portfolio; Allan Murphy and Shaun Masterson, political staffers to the very same minister; Kevin MacAdam, friend and political aide to the minister while at ACOA.

Does the Prime Minister not see a common link here? When will there be cabinet accountability? When will we see it?

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of the hon. member's question. If he were being forthright here, he would recognize that neither the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner, nor the Public Service Commission found any evidence of any political wrongdoing by political ministers, or by political staff. The member's entire question is unfounded.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over 118 countries have signed the arms trade treaty, including every single NATO country except Canada. After much delay, the minister is now claiming that Canada's controls exceed those of the proposed ATT. Therefore, why not sign the ATT? In fact, this will stop the illicit trade of arms, which are now a problem in South Sudan, in CAR and in places like Nigeria. When will the minister sign this deal?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has some of the strongest export controls in the world, including those through the Export and Import Permits Act and the automatic firearms country control list.

What we are deeply concerned about is the establishment of another long gun registry and the billions of dollars that could be wasted. I know that is a great disappointment to my friend opposite.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense. This week, the Government of Nigeria and the International Committee of the Red Cross pleaded for the ratification of the arms trade treaty. This would help us keep illegal weapons out of the hands of terrorist groups like Boko Haram, which is responsible for kidnapping 200 girls in Nigeria. Will the minister listen to the Government of Nigeria and sign the treaty to save lives?

Oral Questions

● (1500)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any Canadian arms that have gone to Boko Haram or any of the examples she has cited, so I am not sure how those problems would have been stopped.

What we do have is strong domestic legislation that controls Canadian arms from finding their way into the hands of the very organizations and governments that she just suggested.

She talks about the government of Nigeria. Obviously, we have some concerns in many respects of that government in terms of exporting arms, given its abysmal human rights record.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night the House passed my Bill C-483. The bill would ensure that the Parole Board of Canada would make decisions related to the release of prisoners on escorted temporary absences. It would stop the process of allowing unaccountable bureaucrats the authority to make decisions about who could leave prison.

The bill came about as the result of an absurd decision to let a convicted cop killer out of prison after he had already been denied parole. The widow of the police officer, Kim Hancox, was fully supportive of my legislation.

Could the Minister of Public Safety please update the House on the bill?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I sit with the member for Oxford who not only brought forward the bill, but who has also been a great police officer.

I was pleased to see nearly all members of the House support this important bill. I wish the leader of the Green Party would have supported it. Why? Because it is another way to give a voice to victims.

Also, I hope the other place will adopt the bill so it can come into force rapidly.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 118 countries have signed the UN arms trade treaty, which is there to control the international trade of illegal arms to terrorists and criminals. Canada remains a laggard. Its continuing excuse is that it needs to consult its lobbyists before signing the treaty.

Could the government tell us when it will finish its consultation and leave the dwindling ranks of the non-signatory countries like Russia, Syria, North Korea—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I noticed the United States has not ratified the treaty in the United States Senate. I look forward to the United States putting that treaty before the United States Senate where there is a democratic—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The member for Westmount—Ville-Marie should listen to the answer to his own questions. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is answering it. If he wants to try to get a supplemental, he might want to try another day, but for now he should listen to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, we put it forward to the Obama administration, which has signed it, to try to ratify it, to put it before the United States Senate where his party has a significant majority. We will follow that very closely.

Obviously, we will follow the international discussions on this issue. We already have a strong arms control regime in Canada to prevent arms from getting into the hands of terrorists and bad actors.

* * *

*[Translation]***RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems as though VIA Rail has given us a raw deal.

For months, we were promised that passenger rail service would resume in the Gaspé as soon as the railway was fixed. The repairs will be finished at the end of June. However, VIA Rail has now announced that service cannot resume because the employees were let go. Enough with the excuses.

Will the government remind VIA Rail that it must follow through on its commitments, or are the Conservatives simply going to abandon the regions?

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that it is this government that has been supportive of VIA Rail in terms of appropriations time and again and it is the party opposite that continues to vote against it, though members say somehow they are supportive of it.

I would remind the member opposite that any decisions by VIA Rail are in fact VIA Rail's own decisions. It is an independent crown corporation that operates at arm's-length from the government.

* * *

● (1505)

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, saving the lives of mothers and newborns in developing countries is an issue people in my riding, and indeed all Canadians, care deeply about. Our government has been clear that saving the lives of mothers and children is our leading development priority.

Joel Spicer of the Micronutrient initiative has noted of the Prime Minister, "It was very clear he was personally committed, that he felt a sense of injustice". The Prime Minister will continue to host high level meetings on this today in Toronto.

Could the parliamentary secretary please update the House?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton for the passion she brings to this file.

Delegates are working together on three key objectives: delivering results for mothers and children; doing more together globally; and taking real action for women and children's health.

We are seeing tremendous results. Anthony Lake of UNICEF recognized the passion of Minister of International Development on the file and credited the Prime Minister. He said, "He has led the way on this and Canada has delivered and is delivering, again 80 per cent of its commitment at Muskoka".

The solution to this problem is within arm's reach and Canada will be a driving force to realize this great achievement.

* * *

RAILWAY SAFETY

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hazardous material is transported daily by rail throughout my riding. By not ensuring the highest safety standards for rail, Conservatives have left communities to fend for themselves.

In Toronto, community members have formed a safe rail communities group. They are calling for greater transparency in rail safety decisions. Why has the minister dropped the ball on this file and left it up to Canadians to do her job?

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is utter nonsense. This government has taken significant actions with respect to improving rail safety; many of those measures, by the way, opposed by New Democrats opposite.

We have worked with our partners, with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, with the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, and with a number of stakeholders to improve information sharing with municipalities, for example.

We are taking action, not rhetoric, like from the opposition.

* * *

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, Cons. Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of Industry for updating this House on his efforts to eliminate interprovincial trade barriers in Canada.

Interprovincial trade barriers are nothing more than ill-conceived, wrong-headed protectionist policies that cost our economy \$50 billion per year and more robust job creation. I say to our premiers, tear down these walls.

Can the Minister of Industry please indicate if he has heard from the nation's businesses and job creators in this regard?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years my colleague from Peterborough has been advocating this kind of reform.

Government Orders

Earlier this year I asked my deputy minister to go across the country and meet with our counterparts in all parts of the country to see what the interest was in moving forward with a new free trade agreement within Canada.

To my great satisfaction, there is great news for all Canadians who want to have more free trade. From British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador and now in Quebec, all parts of this country want to sit down and have a new, comprehensive, pan-Canadian free trade agreement within Canada. This is great news.

It should not be easier for a small business in Cornwall to do business in Syracuse than it is to do business in Sherbrooke. That is currently the case, and we want to make it right.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

EMPRESS OF IRELAND

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the *Empress of Ireland*, which went down in the St. Lawrence River, off Sainte-Luce-sur-Mer, which is in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent from all parties to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of this tragedy that claimed 1,012 lives, including those of 134 children.

[English]

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I ask my colleagues to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1510)

[English]

STRENGTHENING CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed from May 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made Tuesday, May 27, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion at second reading of Bill C-24.

● (1515)

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 157)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélangier	Benskin
Bevington	Boivin
Borg	Brahmi
Brosseau	Caron
Casey	Cash
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseauult	Easter
Eyking	Fortin
Freeman	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Masse	Mathysen
May	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Péclet	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	St-Denis
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Stoffer
Sitsabaiesan	Thibeault
Stewart	Turnel
Sullivan	
Toone	
Valerioté — 101	

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)

Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukivski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	O'Toole
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 140

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1525)

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

(Division No. 158)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Benoit	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	O'Toole
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 140

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
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Business of the House

Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélangier	Benskin
Bevington	Boivin
Borg	Brahmi
Brosseau	Caron
Casey	Cash
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Fortin
Freeman	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Masse	Mathysen
May	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Pécelet	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Turmel
Valeriote — 101	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (House Leader of the Official Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have particularly good news for Canadians today. We will recall that on Tuesday night, there were Conservatives and Liberals rejecting the NDP amendment to work late. They adopted the Conservative motion to basically handcuff the opposition. Conservatives and Liberals said at the time that they wanted to work late for Canadians.

The results are in. After two nights, it is no secret to anybody, the majority of speakers, the majority of members who showed up to work, have been New Democratic MPs defending their constituents and speaking up for Canadians.

Business of the House

It is not just that. The Liberals said they wanted to work. It turns out that there was one Liberal MP who eventually showed up to work on Tuesday night to speak and one Liberal MP who eventually showed up last night to work. What is interesting is not that lack of participation. What is really interesting is the Conservative MPs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member for Winnipeg North is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member, who claims to have experience in the House, knows full well that he is not supposed to be talking about the presence or absence of members in the House. Everyone will notice that I did not talk about the House leader of the official opposition.

I would ask that the official opposition House leader respect the rules. I know that he did not want to sit last night, but the bottom line is that Canadians expect their parliamentarians to work while they are here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I do not think that is a point of order. It is a point of contention as opposed to the debate being heard as part of the Thursday question.

The hon. opposition House leader.

Mr. Peter Julian: Actually, Mr. Speaker, the member would have been right if he was not talking about speakers. He is wrong. Speakers actually show up in *Hansard*, so Canadians who are interested can go online, look at *Hansard*, and see how many members spoke.

The point I was going to make was that there were a number of speaking spots that Conservatives did not show up for. They did not even show up for their shifts. For most Canadians, if they do not show up for their shifts, they do not get paid. For the first two nights, a number of Conservative MPs did not even show up to speak for their constituents. Therefore, after two nights, we can see very clearly that New Democrats show up to work, they fight for their constituents, and they speak out for Canadians every night in the House of Commons, whether it is midnight or 9 p.m.

[*Translation*]

I still have some questions for my colleague, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

First, the government has just moved another time allocation motion. This is the 66th time. How sad. How many times in the coming days will the government use its majority to impose closure or time allocation?

Second, we debated Bill C-17 for a few hours this week. It was introduced in the House in December 2013, and the government refused to debate it for six months. When will the government hold another debate and a vote on that bill? Those are my two questions.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first let me start by acknowledging the support shown on Tuesday night for our motion to have the House work hard for all Canadians to ensure that we have a productive, hard-working, and orderly House of Commons. It was not just this side of the House that voted for this ambitious plan to let MPs reach decisions on many important issues, and I want to thank

the Liberal Party for agreeing to join Conservatives in rolling up their sleeves this spring.

I know my hon. friend has a different definition of what our work is here in the House of Commons. He believes that our work here is to filibuster and fill every moment possible with as many speeches as possible to avoid decisions being made. I have encountered one or two Canadians who think the problem with politicians is too much talk and not enough action. Now we know where they get that impression.

On this side of the House, we are committed to action, we are committed to delivering results, and we are committed to decisions being made and to people participating in votes and making decisions on behalf of their constituents at home. That is why we need debates to also come to a conclusion so we can make those decisions and so we can have those votes.

Last night, for example, we had a great debate on Bill C-24, the strengthening Canadian citizenship act. That is our government taking steps to modernize the Citizenship Act for the first time in some 35 years. What is even better, we just had a vote and a decision. Every single member, not just a dozen or so who might have spoken for a few hours but every single member of this House, got to have a say on behalf of his or her constituents and got to make a decision and advance a bill through the legislation process. That is what it is really all about.

● (1530)

[*Translation*]

Earlier this week, on Tuesday morning—before we adopted the government's ambitious work plan—a number of New Democrats expressed their support for Bill C-17, Vanessa's law. However, they did not walk that talk.

The honourable member for Chambly—Borduas said, “we do recognize the urgency [of this matter]”. Nevertheless, seven other New Democrats then got up after him to block this bill from going to committee. Among them was their deputy leader who said, “I also hope that the bill will go to committee quickly...”.

I wish that the New Democrats listened to their deputy leader. It would be disappointing to think that the NDP might be using Vanessa's law as a political hostage by filibustering it as a means to avoid debating other bills.

I would not want to ascribe such cynical motives to the House Leader of the Official Opposition, and I trust this is not a preview of how he wishes to approach the business of the House for the forthcoming three weeks, when Canadians actually expect us to accomplish things for them.

[*English*]

Looking forward to these three weeks to come, I am pleased to review the business the government will call in the coming days.

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This afternoon, we will carry on with the second reading debate on Bill C-22, the energy safety and security act. Once that has concluded, we will take up Bill C-6, the prohibiting cluster munitions act, at report stage. If time permits, we will get back to third reading and passage of Bill C-3, the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act.

Bill C-10, the tackling contraband tobacco act, will be considered tomorrow at report stage and hopefully at third reading as well.

After the weekend, we will consider Bill C-20, which would implement our free trade agreement with the Republic of Honduras, at report stage.

Following Monday's question period, we will consider Bill C-27, the veterans hiring act, at second reading. That will be followed by second reading of Bill C-26, the tougher penalties for child predators act.

On Tuesday morning, we will start second reading debate on Bill C-35, the justice for animals in service act. The hon. member for Richmond Hill spoke a couple of nights ago about this wonderful bill, Quanto's law, which will have a chance to be considered, thanks to having additional debate time in the House. Since I cannot imagine New Democrats opposing this bill, the only question is how many speeches will they give supporting it, and of course, how will giving more speeches make this bill become law sooner.

Following question period, we will resume debate on Bill C-20, on Canada-Honduras free trade, as well as Bill C-17, the protecting Canadians from unsafe drugs act, which I discussed earlier, Bill C-32, the victims bill of rights act, and Bill C-18, the agricultural growth act.

[*Translation*]

On Wednesday, we will start the second reading debate on Bill C-21, Red Tape Reduction Act. After private members' hour, we will begin report stage of Bill C-31, Economic Action Plan 2014 Act, No. 1, which underwent clause-by-clause study at the Standing Committee on Finance this week.

A week from today, on Thursday next, we will continue debating our budget implementation bill. Ideally, I would also like to see us finish third reading of the bill on the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of the Honduras that day.

Finally, any remaining time available to us that evening will be spent on the bills on which the NDP will be able to offer more, remarkably similar speeches confirming, time after time, their support. Although I appreciate their supportive attitude towards many parts of our government's legislative agenda, it would be great if they would let all members of Parliament have their say, in an ultimate expression of democracy and to help us move from mere words to actual deeds, so that all of us can tell our constituents that we have actually accomplished something on their behalf.

• (1535)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I thank the hon. government House leader and the hon. opposition House leader for their interventions.

Before we go too much farther, just in relation to the point of order by the hon. member for Winnipeg North, it is true that the Standing Orders make reference to the fact that members should avoid comments pertaining to the absence or presence of other members.

I am cognizant of the fact that the hon. opposition House leader did not make any specific reference to any members in his comments. For that reason, it was not an issue that I would say would be standing as an issue that would require some type of retraction.

At the same time, this is a type of commentary that members should be encouraged to avoid. As we all know, members have very busy schedules and have to do many different things at different times throughout the sitting day.

We will carry on with orders of the day.

* * *

ENERGY SAFETY AND SECURITY ACT

The House resumed of the motion that Bill C-22, an act respecting Canada's offshore oil and gas operations, enacting the Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act, repealing the Nuclear Liability Act and making consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Centre.

It is a great opportunity to speak to this very important piece of legislation that would update the liability limits for nuclear and offshore oil and gas sectors. As part of our government's responsible resource development plan, we are enshrining the polluter pays principle into law, and certainly this makes for a very important piece of legislation.

I would like to focus on the fact that the proposed act would play a very central role in advancing our government's northern strategy. I will be limiting most of my remarks to that aspect of the bill, although it would also affect the Atlantic offshore region of our country. When much of the attention has been focused on the impact of the legislation on the Atlantic offshore, it would be equally valuable to northern residents, industry, and taxpayers, as it would extend the same provisions and protections to the Arctic offshore.

We know that Canada's north has tremendous resource potential. Approximately 38% of Canada's remaining marketable resources of natural gas are located in Canada's Arctic, as well as 35% of the remaining light crude oil at over 11 billion barrels of oil. These figures do not include unconventional resources, such as shale oil and gas.

Canada's Arctic petroleum, found primarily offshore in the Beaufort Sea, accounts for one-third of the country's unconventional oil and natural gas reserves.

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The responsible management of Canada's immense petroleum and mineral resources in the region supports our northern strategy goals: more predictable, timely environmental reviews; reduced regulatory burden and duplication; improved environmental protection, which is always important; and meaningful aboriginal consultation making provision for that. No one likes duplication just for duplication's sake and this would harmonize a lot of the regulatory burdens and ensure that they are far easier to follow.

More specifically, Bill C-22 would provide the clarity and certainty industry needs to ensure its developmental plans protect the environment while promoting economic development in Canada's north. The energy safety and security act would also help ensure that any future development occurs in a way that respects aboriginal communities and safeguards the environment for the benefit of future generations. All Canadians can be assured that our government is committed to the safety of Canadians and the protection of the environment.

Once passed, the new legislation would enshrine in law the polluter pays principle that I referred to earlier. This would fulfill our commitment in the Speech from the Throne. It would mean that oil and gas companies operating in both the Atlantic and Arctic offshore would be subject to one of the strictest liability regimes in the world.

Under the proposed act, before any offshore drilling or production activity could take place, the proponent must provide evidence that it can cover the financial costs and damages that may result from a spill. Absolute liability for the environmental costs and third-party losses in the unlikely event of a spill in the Arctic would increase from the \$40 million that is there today to \$1 billion. Of course, the regulators may require higher amounts if they deem it necessary.

A proponent found at fault for a spill would continue to be completely responsible for cleanup and compensation costs.

However, we are saying \$1 billion for strict and absolute liability. Whether they are responsible or at fault or not, the liability would be there. Of course, anyone found at fault for a spill would continue to be completely responsible for cleanup and compensation costs, as I mentioned.

This would standardize northern and southern oil and gas regimes across the country.

In addition, Bill C-22 would demand that industry provide regulators with direct and unfettered access to \$100 million in funds per project or a pooled fund of \$250 million. This would give regulators immediate access to money in the unlikely case they need to take direct action to respond to a spill or compensate affected parties.

There would be an immediate short-term provision, there would be a longer-term provision, and there would be a significant increase in the amount of liability under strict liability and an unlimited amount otherwise.

● (1540)

The energy safety and security act would also establish the right of governments to seek environmental damages. This means that they would have the power to pursue operators for any damages to species, coastlines, or other public resources. These measures would

build on a sound system overseen by strong regulators to ensure world-class standards for Canadian offshore and nuclear industries. They would further strengthen safety and security to prevent incidents and they would ensure swift response in the unlikely event that a spill takes place. Prevention and response and then, in the unlikely event, damages would ensue.

It would also build on recent legislative initiatives to complete our government's action plan to improve northern regulatory regimes by ensuring a predictable, timely regulatory system across the north that supports economic growth in the north while ensuring environmental stewardship. A prime example of such an effort is the Northwest Territories Devolution Act, which received royal assent on March 27, 2013. It gives northerners more control over their own land and resources and will help ensure Northwest Territories residents benefit from the responsible development of the region's great resource potential.

Apart from having strong regulators, Canada has a responsible industry with a solid record of safety and security. With the assurance of these strict new requirements, northern communities can proceed with resource development projects with confidence. We need only consider the benefits the energy industry has already produced for northerners to appreciate its potential to generate even greater impacts for Arctic communities when these energy resources are responsibly developed. Responsible development is key in all areas, but particularly in the north.

In earlier phases of exploration, more than 1,500 wells were drilled, which led to abundant discoveries. Some discoveries were developed for production to support local energy consumption in the north. Imperial Oil's Norman Wells installation, for instance, has contributed to the town's energy supply and economic development. For several decades now, it has also sustained the surrounding communities in terms of jobs, businesses, and infrastructure. It has generated a large revenue stream to government with a percentage of revenue contributing to resource revenue sharing with aboriginal groups in the Mackenzie Valley under the provisions of their land claims.

We know that the Beaufort Sea has incredible potential to produce even better results in the future. There have been more than 60 discoveries to date. In addition, several companies hold exploration licences with cumulative work commitments of over \$1.8 billion. Oil and gas companies are planning work and have filed extensive drilling proposals with the National Energy Board. The proposed drilling is a first for Arctic deep waters, and the first after the release of the National Energy Board's 2011 report on offshore drilling in the Canadian Arctic. That report confirmed that the National Energy Board's regulatory regime can address matters related to the safety of northerners, workers, and the environment.

Environmental stewardship is and always will be a key consideration in resource management. Achieving this objective requires accurate environmental and other scientific, social, and economic data to support good decision-making. Oil and gas exploration development creates unique opportunities to advance Canada's knowledge of the north. As part of the northern strategy, we are looking for innovative programs to advance responsible development and increase our knowledge of the north. One example is the Beaufort regional environmental assessment initiative, or BREA for short. Our government is providing \$21.8 million over four years to ensure that governments, Inuvialuit, regulators, and industry are prepared for renewed oil and gas activity in the Beaufort Sea. Northerners play a prominent role in BREA and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation is part of the national executive committee, while the Inuvialuit Game Council and representatives of the hunter and trapper committees are members of various committees and working groups.

● (1545)

The north's resource potential is a key asset for Canada, though still largely unexplored and untapped. Oil and gas exploration development essentially offers an opportunity for economic and social development through investments, jobs, and training and infrastructure, as well as revenues from resource development.

Given this world-class potential throughout the Arctic, it is imperative that exploration continue responsibly and that northerners actively participate and benefit from that development. Bill C-22 is designed to do just that, as it complements and advances the northern strategy, which promotes the same goals.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is another example of how the Conservative government refuses to act quickly and even meet international standards, which are much higher than those it is proposing.

I want to know whether the member opposite is prepared to ask his government to raise the standards to match the standards that exist elsewhere in the world, which are much tougher than the ones his minister is proposing.

[English]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, this particular legislation would raise the standard considerably in terms of the amount of liability and the amount that developers must put together. It would raise the liability amount from \$30 million or \$40 million, depending on the location, to \$1 billion, and there are provisions beyond that. When we compare that to the amounts and

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the standards in the world, we certainly meet or exceed the top countries involved in this particular type of regime.

This legislation is leading in its own way, and it would be a standard that others would use and apply in the future.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am saddened by the fact that the member's speech is full of the same bluster we hear in the Conservatives' remarks about their efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. Everyone in the world—not just in Canada, but the world—knows that Canada is an outlier when it comes to its efforts with respect to its environmental record. The Conservatives are not even expected to meet their very low 2020 expectations under Copenhagen, and that is an extreme disappointment.

With regard to bluster, BP spent almost \$8 billion trying to clean up the Gulf of Mexico after that oil spill, yet the member for Souris—Moose Mountain touts \$1 billion as being an adequate amount of liability. Could he possibly tell me from his investigation how the \$1 billion limit of liability was set, when we all know that costs are going to be well beyond \$1 billion if there is ever a spill?

● (1550)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the nuclear liability portion of this particular piece of legislation would ensure that we have continuous production of clean energy, particularly in Ontario, and that member is from this particular province.

In my riding we have the carbon capture and sequestration project, which takes care of emissions generated in other types of electrical production, so we have gone a long way in ensuring clean energy and in dealing with that aspect of it.

The present liability portion is \$30 million to \$40 million. This would be increased substantially. Not only would it be increased substantially, but the bill makes provision for additional funds to be put in place by the operators for immediate concerns and immediate purposes. Additionally, depending on which part of the legislation, the matter can be brought back to the House as well.

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's contribution to this debate and the important work he is doing for his constituents.

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I want to build on this discussion about liability. While I would find it otherwise irresistible to respond in some way to the previous member's question about greenhouse gases, and I am proud to say that this government has delivered a net reduction in GHG emissions for the first time ever, I need to talk about liability, because it is more to the point of this particular debate. I am concerned about the NDP's proposal for a nuclear liability amount that would not take into account the real capacity of insurers.

Could my colleague tell me how Bill C-22 would balance the need for operators to be responsible for the costs of an incident with the need to be realistic while protecting Canadian taxpayers? It is a tough but fair question at this time in the debate.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-22 does address the need for operators to provide adequate and appropriate compensation—and I have referred to that—without burdening them with exorbitant costs for unrealistic amounts of insurance against events that are highly unlikely to occur in this country. The \$1 billion that I spoke of strikes a proper balance between providing adequate compensation for citizens for a nuclear incident and holding companies to account in the event of an accident. In all of these matters we must have that balance.

The amount is also well above the liability limit imposed on nuclear operations in many other countries and is in line with the limits that have been proposed in the EU, so in a lot of ways we have set a standard and in a lot of ways we have done what other countries have been thinking about doing.

Of course, when we look at what the present regime is compared to what we propose it would be, we see there is a substantive and significant increase to ensure that there is adequate protection at the same time that we protecting taxpayers as well. This is a balance that I think has been appropriately achieved in this bill.

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very excited to be getting up to speak on Bill C-22.

The energy safety and security act should actually boost Canadians' confidence in what is already a very world-class safety and regulatory regime for our offshore and nuclear industries.

Bill C-22 is important, and it is important to the marine environment that we all love. It demonstrates here today, with concrete proof, that our government is committed not only to protecting the safety and security of Canadians but also to protecting our environment.

Let us make no mistake: we are the only party in this House of Commons that is looking out for our environment and for our sustainable energy development. This energy development pays many of our bills, bills for education, pensions, and health care, things that vastly increase all Canadians' quality of life.

As we have said, under our responsible resource development plan, the development of our natural resources will proceed only, and I highlight this, if it is safely done in a way that is safe for Canadians and safe for our environment.

I want to give a little background.

Management of offshore oil and gas in this case is carried out jointly by the Government of Canada, the Province of Nova Scotia,

and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Government of Canada has been working very co-operatively with these two provinces to create a really strong offshore safety system for oil and gas exploration and operations, and it is world class.

That is not just rhetoric. In fact, an independent consultancy group, PFC Energy, rated Canada, the U.K., Norway, and Australia as the world leaders in offshore regimes, in contrast to what the NDP was trying to feed us a few minutes ago.

This is based on our unique combination of extensive regulations and processes. Bill C-22 is going to take those even further. The energy safety and security act reflects the continued collaboration with the provinces and really strengthens regulations in three main areas. Those are prevention, response, and accountability.

Today, given my limited time, I am going to focus on response, and pollution response specifically.

Bill C-22 enhances our response capability by adding what we are calling a new tool to the emergency response tool kit in the very unlikely event of a spill. That tool is spill-treating agents.

I will address what spill-treating agents are, why they are a very effective response option, and the stringent safeguards this bill puts in place so their use is environmentally safe.

I am sure all members in the House would agree with me on one thing, which is that in a world-class response regime, it is critical to have the capability to respond in the most effective way possible if there is ever an incident. A key component of Bill C-22 involves giving responders the very best technology and scientific advancements available so that they can have that swift and effective response.

Spill-treating agents are scientifically determined to be the best way to mitigate the environmental effects if there is a spill. Of course, our aim is to prevent any spills, and Canada does have an excellent track record. In fact, the vast majority of spills are under one litre. That is right: under one litre. I think it is important that Canadians know that so they can put this issue in context.

Our largest spill, regrettably, was 1,000 barrels at Terra Nova in 2004. The next-largest Atlantic Canada spill was just 38 barrels. That lets people know what we are dealing with here.

No spill, of course, is one we want to see, but when used appropriately, generally within the first 12 hours, spill-treating agents can reduce the impact of an oil spill on the environment. When these substances are applied to the oil spill, they change the behaviour of the oil so that they can help control the path that the spill is going to take and they can mitigate the effects of the spill on the coastal or marine environment. They will also assist in the natural process of biodegradation.

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Spill-treating agents are not new. In fact, they are an accepted part of the offshore oil and gas safety regime in a number of countries with regimes similar to Canada's, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Norway.

• (1555)

At present, spill treating agents are not used here in Canada, but in 2013 the tanker safety expert panel, an independent panel that was commissioned by Transport Canada, recommended that the government approve the use of these spill treating agents. Therefore, with this bill today we are accepting that recommendation. We believe it really does make sense. I should stress that these agents would only be used if their use would result in an overall net environmental benefit.

With that in mind, there are four conditions we have put in place in the bill. These agents could only be used if the conditions are met. First, the spill treating agent must be on an approved list prescribed by the government. Second, the spill treating agent must be included in the operator's spill contingency plan, which must be approved by the offshore regulator before the operator begins operations. Third, the regulator's chief conservation officer, who is an individual with a wide range of powers, has to determine that the use of the spill treating agent is really likely to achieve this environmental net benefit. Fourth, the spill treating agent has to be used in conjunction with the regulations and conditions that are imposed by the chief conservation officer I just spoke about.

I will just explain these conditions in a bit more depth. The first condition states that the spill treating agent has to be on a prescribed list. The minister of the environment, not the minister of natural resources, would actually establish this list based on scientific evidence regarding the potential for these agents to provide an environmentally beneficial effect. It is setting that bar very high.

The second condition is built into the operating licence. Every operator has to submit a contingency plan in order to actually obtain an operating licence. If the operator wants to use a spill treating agent, it has to be included in that plan. The regulatory bodies here are the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board and the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. Unless one of these two boards determines that the use of the spill treating agent is likely to achieve this net environmental benefit, it would not be accepted as part of the spill contingency plan.

The effect of all this is to require really careful consideration of whether the spill treating agents are actually appropriate and environmentally beneficial, both at the front end of the planning process, as well as later on in the planning process when an event might actually happen. This planning would also allow for informed decisions to be made quickly, because in the event of a spill we want to act fast, so that we can contain it.

The third condition, that the offshore board has to determine that the use of the spill treating agent must be likely to achieve an environmental net benefit, is a way to verify that the response options that are put into that plan at the beginning are actually going to be appropriate on the scene, as every spill has different conditions. It would be assessed on both ends. There are a lot of variables that can be present at the time of a spill that might make the agents

appropriate or not. They are things like waves and tides and how much the product might be dispersed.

The fourth and final condition is that the spill treating agent would have to be used in accordance with the regulations and any additional conditions that are imposed by the chief conservation officer. This gives some flexibility to further fine tune the conditions on the scene as our use of scientific and technical know-how evolves.

In conclusion, spill treating agents are part of a comprehensive toolkit of spill response techniques. Responders have indicated that they want them in their toolkit. Currently, the mechanical techniques they are using that we are most familiar with, booms and skimmers, can be quite effective but superior results can often be gained by using these spill treating agents.

Bill C-22 provides numerous checks and balances, which I have gone through, to ensure they would only be deployed when their use would be of a net environmental benefit. The commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, in his fall 2012 report, supported these measures.

Bill C-22 is one more reason Canadians can have confidence that their government is diligently protecting all of our interests in developing offshore oil and gas and protecting our environment every step of the way. I ask my hon. colleagues opposite to join us in supporting Bill C-22 at second reading so it can move on to committee.

• (1600)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that the member for Calgary Centre dealt primarily with oil and gas, but my concern is about the nuclear side of this bill.

One of her colleagues earlier suggested that the amounts proposed in this bill would bring Canada in line with Europe. However, our limitation would be \$1 billion for a nuclear accident, while the U.S. limitation is \$12.6 billion and Germany, Japan, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Austria, and Switzerland have unlimited liability. There is no liability.

Is putting a liability cap on something that is potentially so dangerous not a way of subsidizing an industry? Is that not a negative consequence for the Canadian taxpayer?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised to hear the NDP worried about the taxpayer, but I am delighted to answer the question.

I have a particular interest in the nuclear industry, because I covered it as a natural resources reporter. I can tell members that this \$1 billion is the right balance between providing adequate compensation for citizens if there is a nuclear incident and also holding companies to account.

We are moving to the polluter pays model. This limit is well above the liability limits that are being imposed on nuclear operators in many countries.

The NDP is never happy until it can actually shut down all of our industry in Canada.

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•(1605)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask the same question of this member as I did of the previous Conservative speaker.

The Conservatives are somewhat delusional in having Canadians believe that they care at all about the environment. They are outliers, not just in Canada, but throughout the world in their inattention to the reduction of greenhouse gases.

Now, the member would have us believe that somehow this legislation is the panacea to protecting our environment.

The previous NDP member asked about liability. It cost close to \$8 billion to clean up the Gulf of Mexico after the BP spill. Somehow, she thinks that \$1 billion is an acceptable amount to Canadians as a limit of liability.

I would ask her very specifically, because she claims that it is a balance, if she can tell us how the amount of \$1 billion was arrived at, when other countries have vastly larger limits and other spills have cost vastly more than \$1 billion.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite, unfortunately, is using the Justin Trudeau model of “budgets balance themselves”. This is the party that—

Mr. Frank Valeriote: You cannot mention Justin Trudeau.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. This is just a reminder to the hon. member.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. I apologize.

Greenhouse gases do not go down by themselves. The member opposite should know that the government's record is reducing greenhouse gases. We are more than halfway on our way to meeting our emissions targets, while the greenhouse gas levels went up 30% under the Liberals opposite.

The safety record in the Canadian offshore is absolutely phenomenal. We have a phenomenal track record. We have basically never had a consequential spill on our west coast. On our east coast, I went through the two spills: one was of 1,000 barrels and the other was of 38 barrels.

Believe me when I say that \$1 billion is plenty, and it meets the criteria that are being used in other countries around the world, and exceeds them in many instances.

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems to be that, here in Ottawa, we receive officials from all across the north who are coming here because they want to see that their local input and local priorities can go forward. We have passed many bills in the House to help support development and to help support investment.

Obviously, there are many cases where Canadians want to see increased jobs and growth, but also increased environmental sustainability. The member has brought up many points in her speech that, as she said, strike a balance. For example, there are many opportunities in the north where small hydro projects or small nuclear projects may allow a resource development community to be able to open up new opportunities.

Does the member feel that this piece of legislation would help those kinds of opportunities? Again, these new kinds of plants—for example, nuclear facilities in France—require more updated laws. Would these kinds of opportunities, in the member's estimation, come along with this bill's passage?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, of course they will, and we heard some very interesting testimony at the natural resources committee recently about how energy development in Canada has actually extended our life spans. It has resulted in the reforestation of much of this country, because we used to take all of our fuel straight off the surface of the earth and cut down all the trees. Now, because of advancements in oil and gas and nuclear, we actually are living in a much greener country and on a greener planet than we used to.

Of course, we cannot go without mentioning our aboriginal Canadian citizens, because we are specifically targeting to work with them. We have been consulting with them and have heard that in resource development, they are often a community that can really benefit from this kind of activity.

•(1610)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak in support of our government's proposed new legislation to increase accountability in Canada's nuclear and offshore industries.

Before I continue, I would like to announce to all present that I will be splitting my time with the valued and intellectual member for Yukon, who sits with me on the natural resources committee and does an absolutely amazing job standing up for Yukoners and their natural resource sector and does a much better job than the previous member of Parliament for that region certainly did.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has responsibility for Canada's international treaties as well as nuclear non-proliferation policy, he has stressed the importance of bringing Canada into an international nuclear liability convention. This convention would facilitate trade among nuclear power manufacturers while providing for streamlined compensation in the event of a nuclear accident in a country that is a party to the treaty. This is important to Canada, where 15% of electricity is generated by nuclear power. The mix of nuclear, hydro, wind, and solar-powered generation means that 77% of the electricity produced in Canada emits no greenhouse gases. We are number one in the G7 in this regard.

To advance Canada's intention to join an international nuclear liability and compensation regime, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Consular, the hon. member for Blackstrap, signed the convention on supplementary compensation for nuclear damage, or the CSC, in Vienna, in December 2013. I would like to talk about some of those benefits.

Government Orders

With Canada's having achieved that important milestone, let me emphasize that the passage of Bill C-22, the energy safety and security act, would allow Canada to ratify and fully join the convention on supplementary compensation for nuclear damage. I should note that Canada's signature on the treaty has encouraged Japan and South Korea to accelerate their approval processes for joining.

Once one of those countries joins the convention, the combined nuclear power capacity of treaty members will, according to the requirements set by the convention's drafters, be sufficient for the treaty to enter or come into force. This would allow Canada's nuclear trade with the U.S.A. and other treaty member states to flourish. It would establish absolute certainty that liability lies with the operator in the event of a nuclear incident. This clarity would allow manufacturers of nuclear power components and systems in member states to export without the worry of liability that may otherwise impede trade.

Ratification of the convention on supplementary compensation for nuclear damage would offer Canadians two additional pools of international funds for compensation up to \$1.45 billion in the event of a nuclear incident. Ratification would also provide exclusive jurisdiction of the Canadian court in the case of a nuclear accident in Canada causing damage internationally. As noted, the convention on supplementary compensation would also channel liability exclusively to the nuclear operator of the site where a nuclear accident occurs, thereby providing business certainty to the many nuclear supply chain companies that add value to the Canadian economy domestically and abroad.

As a treaty member, in the event of a nuclear accident outside Canada, Canada would have its liability limited to \$23 million per event, and it would be recovered from nuclear operators in Canada. Taxpayers would be fully protected from any expense. The method of reimbursement to the federal government by the nuclear industry for any amount paid out would be established by regulation prior to Canadian ratification of the convention. This has international importance and consequence.

The convention is aimed at a worldwide liability regime in which all states may participate, regardless of whether they are members of any existing civil nuclear liability conventions or have nuclear installations in their territories.

• (1615)

While the convention is open to all states, those with nuclear installations must also be party to the International Atomic Energy Agency's nuclear safety convention. Canada ratified that convention in 1995 and since then has been a leader in nuclear safety, transparency, accountability, and best practices at the triennial review meetings.

Canada's ratification of the convention on supplementary compensation for nuclear damage would be a favourable response to international calls, led by the U.S. government and the IAEA, for countries to establish a global liability regime. As the world continues to recognize the clean energy advantages of nuclear power, the importance of such an instrument as this only increases, and of course, there are domestic benefits as well.

The convention would also facilitate nuclear development for Canadian provinces, especially Ontario and New Brunswick, which have nuclear power generating programs already.

Within the G7, Canada and Japan are the only members that do not belong to a major international civil nuclear liability regime. This would also be addressed through Bill C-22, and we are confident that Canada's example will help move other countries in the same direction.

This legislation brings Canada up to date with international standards and best practices in the nuclear sector. Our government has made a number of attempts to modernize our nuclear safety system. This is my third Parliament, and I remember the previous iterations of this legislation, and every time, only the NDP opposed improved safety measures.

We on this side of the House support a strong and safe nuclear industry that generates non-emitting electricity. Allow me to quote the Leader of the Opposition. These are the words of the NDP. They are not mine. He stated:

I want to be very clear. The NDP is opposed to any new nuclear infrastructure in Canada.

Canadians know that nuclear energy can be generated safely while supporting jobs for thousands of Canadians. While the NDP will continue to oppose our efforts to improve the safety of this important industry, we will focus on the safety of Canadians and a safe environment. It is time to move this very important initiative to its conclusion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. Before we go to questions and comments, and I am sure there will be some, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Quebec, Consumer Protection.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I take issue with the comments of the member opposite. I first have to say that the NDP's priority is protecting the interests of Canadians and respecting Canadian tax dollars. With that respect comes a real sense of perplexity as to why the government would place a limit on the liability of the oil and gas and nuclear industries. For example, he has just said that the nuclear industry is an incredibly safe industry. If it is a mature and safe industry, then let it pay for itself. Why should Canadians be on the hook for potential liability caused by this mature and safe industry? Other countries have either no limit on liability for these companies or they have limits that are set much higher than those set by the government.

My question to the member opposite is this: why have limited liability? Why leave Canadian taxpayers on the hook for industry disasters?

Government Orders

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who asked me the question left a lot of facts out of that question. For example, she failed to mention that not only is Canada's proposed set target of \$1 billion not the highest, but it is also by far not the lowest. There are a number of other countries around the world that have much lower limits.

She also failed to mention that in the United States, for example, which has over five times as many nuclear installations, they have a pooled plan whereby they have individual liabilities for their companies, which when combined form a pooled amount that is far greater than Canada's. We simply do not have that capacity.

The hon. member should have brought up the fact that Japan, before the Fukushima incident, had unlimited liability for its companies. However, no company has the fiscal capacity to deal with a disaster like Fukushima, and the Government of Japan had to step in and deal with it at any rate.

The \$1 billion is the right amount. Everyone in the industry who knows what they are talking about accepts it. The only people who do not accept it are the ones who do not know what they are talking about.

• (1620)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me a chance to address the bill. It is not that I have not had the opportunity in the past, because I think this is the fifth time this legislation has come forward, and I have been here for at least four of those. It is good to see it finally moving ahead. Through all of those iterations, the NDP has been consistently incoherent.

I want to add to something the member said earlier. Canada does have \$1 billion put aside for compensation, and I believe that part of the bill deals with signing the convention on supplementary compensation for nuclear damage, which would bring in another half-billion dollars that would be potentially available if it was needed as well.

I would like to know if the member would address some of the limits we find in other countries to see how Canada's limit of \$1 billion straight up and that other half-billion dollars that is available through the supplementary compensation fits with what is going on in other countries. I want to note, as the member did, that the Americans have far more nuclear installations. They have a pool there, but their individual operators are actually liable for less than half of what the Canadian operators would be individually. I look forward to his comments.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the reasoned and logical question from my colleague. We used to sit on the natural resources committee together for a number of years when he was the parliamentary secretary to the minister of Natural Resources. I certainly appreciate his wisdom and guidance and his knowledge and expertise on this file. We should not be surprised that an intelligent question comes from him.

Let me compare Canada's current position in the bill, which is \$1 billion. It is in line with international standards. It is significantly higher than the limits set by many of our nuclear peers. In the U.K., the operator liability is currently capped at approximately \$260

million, which is basically one-quarter of what we are proposing in the legislation. South Africa is \$240 million. Spain is \$227 million, and France is even lower, at \$140 million.

My finding is that \$1 billion is a reasoned approach. We met extensively with many stakeholders who are involved in this. We are protecting the Canadian public and at the same time are not setting such a burdensome insurance or liability regime in place that we would drive business completely out of Canada, especially a clean business like nuclear energy. One would think the Liberals and the NDP would be in favour of non-GHG electrical generation. I am surprised that they would impose caps on these Canadian businesses that would basically drive the businesses out of business, and goodness knows where we would get our clean electricity then.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate and the hon. member for Yukon, I would let the House know that more than five hours have passed since the opening round of debate on this question, in which case, all of the interventions from this point on will be limited to 10 minutes for speeches and the usual five minutes for questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Yukon.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have 10 minutes to try to do as much for the issue as my great friend and colleague from Wetaskiwin just did. After listening to him, I probably do not need to say much more. I think he said it all. Even the Liberal Party agrees he did such a fantastic job.

Of the many issues and the many persuasive arguments to support Bill C-22, few matter more to the residents of the Canadian north than the fact that the legislation would protect and defend the Arctic offshore. This is something all Canadians and northerners particularly are genuinely passionate about.

Our government has put the Arctic region higher on the domestic policy agenda than it ever has been before. We are determined to see Canada's north achieve its promise as a healthy and prosperous region that captures the benefits of economic development without harming the Arctic's unique environment.

We envision a north that fully realizes its social and economic potential to secure a higher standard of living and quality of life for today's generation and for those that follow. The vision is articulated in our northern strategy that focused on exercising our sovereignty, enhancing northern environmental stewardship, promoting social and economic development, and improving and devolving northern governance.

Since releasing the strategy, our government has taken action in all four areas, equipping northerners with new authorities, resources and tools that they need to play a central role in the Canadian economy now and into the future.

Government Orders

Less than two months ago, our government's promised Northwest Territories Devolution Act received royal assent, giving northerners control of their own onshore resources and improving regulatory regimes in the Northwest Territories. Bill C-22 is the latest in this long list of initiatives.

As members know, the Arctic's offshore harbours enormous resource wealth, which, if responsibly harnessed, can increase opportunity and prosperity in the Arctic and across all of Canada's north for generations. However, as Bill C-22 makes clear, we are not advocating development at any price. We are instituting important new measures with the legislation to protect the environment and public health and safety. We are putting industry on notice that it will be held to account in the unlikely event of any spill.

Our government recognizes the need for effective stewardship to ensure that future resource development occurs in a way that respects the traditions of first nation and Inuit communities and that ensures the Arctic environment is safeguarded.

To explain how this proposed act would advance these goals, let me first explain the federal role in Canada's Arctic offshore.

Petroleum management in the north is legislated under the Canadian Petroleum Resource Act and the Canadian Oil and Gas Operations Act. Land, royalty and benefit issues are managed by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada on behalf of the minister. The National Energy Board administers the Canadian Oil and Gas Operations Act and associated technical regulations.

While offshore oil and gas reserves remain under federal authority, Canada's three northern territories are now strongly engaged in responsible resource management. As I previously alluded to, on April 1 of this year the Government of the Northwest Territories assumed responsibility for onshore land and resource management in that territory. In Yukon, the transfer of land resource management responsibilities occurred in 2003, and we look to future negotiations with Nunavut toward a devolution agreement in that territory.

Devolution gives northerners control over resource development decisions, among other things. As one example, the Northwest Territories devolution agreement provided for the transfer of more than 100 oil and gas licences from the Government of Canada to the territorial government. This included several production licences as well as numerous exploration licences in the Sahtu settlement region, which are attracting industry interest in its shale resources. These new responsibilities allow the territories to take full control over exploration, production, and supply of oil and gas to northern communities and beyond.

●(1625)

Within these areas of federal jurisdiction, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada officials work to create the conditions for a positive investment climate that enables the private sector to successfully compete in the north. There is a well-established market driven oil and gas rights issuance process, with an annual opportunity to obtain exploration rights through a competitive process. This process of regular calls for bids increases investment confidence in Canada's frontier lands.

There is widespread agreement on the need for responsible resource development to create jobs and economic opportunity

across the north, and a willingness on the part of all parties to work together to achieve this potential. However, confidence in industry's ability to be responsible environmental stewards was eroded with the fateful accident in the Gulf of Mexico in the summer of 2010. This led to the subsequent Arctic offshore drilling review by the National Energy Board, which triggered a federal review of Canada's frontier oil and gas regulatory regime. In turn, this led to the development of the legislation that is before us today.

Informed by the findings of the Arctic offshore drilling review, along with recommendations and the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development's 2012 fall report, Bill C-22 would take action to ensure that no development would proceed unless rigorous environmental stewardship measures were already put in place.

The energy safety and security act proposes new safety and environmental authorities for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and the National Energy Board to help them better administer oil and gas development in the Arctic offshore. Chief among the improvements, the legislation would raise offshore absolute liability limits from \$40 million to \$1 billion. This would mean that only companies that have sufficient financial resources to prevent and respond to incidents are active in Canada's offshore.

Bill C-22 would also authorize the use of spill-treating agents when they can be expected to achieve a net environmental benefit. This would create a new tool for operators to use in the response to an offshore spill, should one ever occur.

The legislation would enshrine the principle of polluter pays. This means that in the unlikely event of a spill, any of the damages to species, coastlines, or other public resources could be addressed. Especially important, it would give regulators direct access to \$100 million in funds per project or a pooled fund of \$250 million, if needed, in case they had to take action to respond to a spill or to compensate affected parties.

The proposed amendments complement the changes to the territorial lands and resource management legislation in the Northwest Territories, which establishes fixed review timelines, monetary penalties for regulatory infractions, and cost recovery regulations. The territorial government is obligated to substantially mirror all amendments in federal frontier statutes to support integration for a minimum of 20 years.

Government Orders

Once passed, the legislation will confirm the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development's authority to order the joint exploration and development of oil and gas fields that straddle federal offshore administrative jurisdiction and other administrative jurisdictions.

Our government has consulted widely on these proposed amendments with territorial governments, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and industry representatives, all of whom, by the way, support these measures because they recognize they are necessary and should be in place before any major development in the north occurs, in order to protect the environment and public health and safety.

With approval of Bill C-22, all of these measures will be established prior to any drilling in the Arctic offshore.

Beyond being our government's northern strategic goals, these aspirations are shared by the people in all the communities across all of Canada's north. People are counting on us to pass this important legislation so they can responsibly develop the north's region and utilize and realize its immense energy potential.

Therefore, I call on all parties in the House to join us in supporting this important legislation for the people of the north and indeed the people of Canada.

• (1630)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will come back to the nuclear energy side of it, and I know there are not a whole lot of nuclear reactors up in Yukon.

The proposed legislation suggests an upper limit of \$1 billion for nuclear power operators. Nuclear power operators in Canada generate about \$5 billion a year in electricity, so it would seem that the cost of actually providing a bigger level of protection to Canadians is well within their grasp. In the United States it is \$12.6 billion and in most of Europe it is an unlimited liability. Why, then, would the Conservatives consider \$1 billion to be sufficient to protect the taxpayers and to ensure that the plants are as safe as possible?

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, the member for Wetaskiwin did an excellent job of explaining why the \$1 billion liability would be sufficient and balanced for our country. The one thing that is important to note is it is a substantial increase. This has not changed since 1976, and here we are in 2014 looking forward to cleaner energy generation in our country.

The one thing that needs to be expressed when we talk about this is finding the balance of attracting this sort of development for cleaner, greener energy technology in our country to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We do not want to set a limit so high that it obstructs any of that, because then we have to rely on diesel generation. I and the people of the north know this. We have to rely on burning diesel to heat our homes and to transport food on the highways. Electrical generation in our country needs to get cleaner and greener, and this would be a great way of doing that.

The member referenced the U.S. \$12.6 billion liability. The member for Wetaskiwin accurately pointed out that the U.S. enjoys the benefit of being able to pool those liability plants, and individual plants are lower than the Canadian limit. While we talk about a

couple of others that have unlimited liability plants that are higher than Canada, there are a number that are substantially lower, including the United Kingdom. South Africa has a \$240 million limit. Spain has a \$227 million limit. France is even lower at \$140 million.

Canada has found the right balance to ensure we can deal with this without making it so obstructionist that we are unable to enjoy the benefits that we would get from clean energy generation and the Canadian benefit with lower and cleaner electrical costs.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to what my colleague just said about the liability limit for companies. If there were an unfortunate accident and the damages were much greater than the limit proposed in the bill, who would be liable for the difference? Would the private company be liable for the accident or would the taxpayers be left paying the balance yet again?

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Speaker, the one thing we have to reflect on is what benefits Canadians receive from cleaner energy technology. I am not so inclined to deal with the worse-case scenarios because what we have, as was noted, is a mature, responsible, well-developed, and extremely safe industry that happens to provide tremendous benefits to Canadians from coast to coast with clean energy generation.

An increase in the limited liability from \$40 million up to \$1 billion is a substantial increase. It is remarkably higher than other countries.

If we are going to talk about the unfortunate and very unlikely event of a disaster, then we have to be realistic about the clean-up and the capacity to do that. We can look at Fukushima for example, as the member for Wetaskiwin pointed out. Despite the unlimited liability that Japan carried, there was no way the corporation could cover those costs, and Japan ended up having to step in and pick up those costs.

It does not matter what we set the liability amount at. If we make it so outlandish that there is no capacity to deliver it, then it is an unrealistic point we are making in legislation. We are ensuring we strike that perfect balance so as to invite that development, invite that industry, so Canadians can enjoy the benefits of safe, clean, green energy technology at an affordable rate with reasonable and sensible protection for Canada and its environment.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill, which ironically is titled the energy safety and security act. I say ironically because nothing in the bill actually talks about energy security, which is something that residents in my riding and across Canada have been asking the government to protect for many years. Energy security means actually providing that we have a reliable and secure source of energy in our homes, in our businesses, and in our workplaces.

Government Orders

The bill is weaving its way through and has taken forever. There are portions of the bill that are to ratify international obligations. It was introduced by the government on several previous occasions, and each time the government was the cause of the bill actually not proceeding. First, it was the quick call of an election in 2008 before the four years was up, then a prorogation actually eliminated the ability for that bill to go forward, and finally, an election was called before the bill finished wending its way, so it has been on the books for several years.

There is some importance to the speed with which the bill goes through, but obviously the government wants to take its time and discuss it over a long period of time. However, another bill, Bill C-24, was voted on in an absolutely tearing hurry just this afternoon, and yet I was not able to speak on it.

I have had meetings with constituents who have expressed serious concerns and serious reservations about the core of a bill that would give the minister the ability to take away the citizenship of persons born in Canada, which is an unprecedented thing in Canada and should have had a considerable amount of opportunity for members to discuss. Yet the government moved time allocation with only about five hours of debate on this subject. It boggles the mind why that is so much more necessary to be hurried along than this bill, on which the government has taken years and years.

I will focus mostly on the nuclear side of this, because I have some personal concerns about the nuclear side of it. There have been a number of serious events on this planet involving nuclear power generation. Those events involving nuclear power generation have brought, I think, into crystal clear relief the fact that we have completely underestimated the costs of an actual disaster in these things. We are treating these nuclear power plants as just a piece of the landscape, but when in fact they go wrong, the cost is absolutely enormous.

Three Mile Island was a relatively small disaster. It was the first of the biggies, but it was a small disaster in terms of what actually happened. Nobody was killed and there were no bodily injuries, but the cleanup took 14 years and \$1 billion, starting in 1979. A billion dollars was what was needed in 1979 for a small problem. Now we are in 2014, 35 years further along, and \$1 billion is all that the nuclear industry has to put up if there is a liability involving a nuclear problem at a nuclear plant.

Let us fast-forward just seven years to Chernobyl. Chernobyl had \$15 billion in direct losses. That is the plant itself, direct losses at the time on the site, a number of deaths, a whole lot of injuries; and over the next 30 years, it is estimated that because of the thousands upon thousands of residents of Ukraine and Belarus who will develop cancer, those costs could be over \$500 billion.

We are not suggesting that the nuclear industry in Canada is capable of covering a cost of \$500 billion, but to suggest \$1 billion is all that is necessary is laughable, particularly when this industry is now quite robust and has been around a long time in relative terms.

• (1640)

The government is suggesting only \$1 billion. That is actually a subsidy to this industry. We do not need to be subsidizing the nuclear power industry in this country, particularly when just two years ago

the government gave away the CANDU licence to SNC-Lavalin. Now, a private corporation is actually in control of the development of our nuclear reactor system. It is not a corporation that is getting a whole lot of good reviews lately.

Then we come to 2011 and Fukushima. This is by far the worst of the nuclear disasters. It really brings home just how bad things can get when things go wrong in ways that are not expected. That is the essence of what nuclear designers are trying to do: figure out what we can do to protect against the unexpected.

Fukushima will probably cost between \$250 billion and \$500 billion when it is done. Nobody is absolutely certain. There is an untold human cost of Fukushima. They have had to evacuate and evict 159,000 people from the area around Fukushima. Though those people have not been told this, they can probably never go back to their homes.

Caesium-137, radioactive caesium, has a 30-year half-life. That radioactive material is now all over the ground, in the water, and in the air, in the area around that reactor. Because of a 30-year half-life, that means it will be centuries before those places are safe to inhabit again. Those people are still paying mortgages on their homes, but it will be centuries before they can go back to them.

That is the magnitude of what a nuclear disaster is really all about. I am afraid the government really does not understand just what it is dealing with in terms of tossing out the number \$1 billion as if it is somehow an appropriate number to suggest the nuclear industry would have to come up with.

I am of two minds on the whole notion of nuclear energy as being a good thing for Canada. My father-in-law came back from World War II. He was a pilot in the RAF. He went to Chalk River and helped build those first few reactors at Chalk River. He was part of the design team that designed the CANDU system. His name was Roy Tilbe. He has passed on now, but he had a fierce loyalty to the nuclear industry generally and a fierce dedication to trying to make it a safe industry.

He would be appalled to think that the taxpayers have to pick up the ball if the industry is not safe enough. That is essentially what the government is suggesting to the industry, after six or seven years of dithering on what to do, by offering a paltry \$1 billion as all that is required. The costs are of such magnitude that \$1 billion is dwarfed by what those costs really are in the sense of a nuclear accident.

Let me talk about another cost that nobody here has talked about. Nuclear reactors in Canada and elsewhere have effluent, an output, waste. Nuclear waste is very toxic. It is something that people should not go near.

I was up on a little tour of Chalk River, where they showed us their nuclear waste management site. They did not call it a disposal site, but a management site. We went on a little bus. There was a bunch of Japanese and German tourists on the bus with us. We went around to the management site, and we were told that inside the steel cylinders encased in concrete was the waste. We know that the steel lasts about 150 years, and the concrete lasts about 75 years. So every 75 years, the concrete has to be replaced, and every 150 years the steel has to be replaced.

Government Orders

I asked the guide how long that would have to be done. I was told 75 years for the concrete and 150 for the steel. No, I said; I asked how long we had to manage the waste. I was told 500,000 years.

• (1645)

Has anybody really recognized what that means? What will \$1 billion be worth in 500,000 years? Who will be around? Will SNC-Lavalin still be around? Will I still be around? The safety of Canadians should be paramount, and the industry should be held accountable.

• (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we look at the nuclear industry, we see it is ultimately the responsibility of governments to work hand in hand with other governments, so that we achieve the safest possible environment where there is nuclear waste or byproducts from using nuclear energy.

One of the products we use extensively is isotopes for X-rays and so forth. It needs to be acknowledged that there is a very real practical need in medicine. Having those isotopes is of critical importance for scans and so forth. I wonder if the member could comment on that. There is a lot of discussion about nuclear reactors, but there are other aspects of the nuclear industry of which we need to be aware.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: In fact, Mr. Speaker, it was the Prime Minister who fired the nuclear safety officer when she declared that the reactor that was preparing these much-needed isotopes was operating in an unsafe way because some procedures had not been followed with regard to earthquake-proofing that reactor. The answer from the government was, “To hell with safety; let’s fire the regulator”.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Seriously? Watch your language a little.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Sorry; “To heck with safety; let’s fire the regulator.”

Nuclear energy is perhaps a good thing, but we need to understand it and we need to understand just how dangerous it can be if it goes wrong, and that is something I do not think the government understands.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to the argument we sometimes hear that there is little chance of such events ever occurring. Our colleagues opposite say it is strictly theoretical.

I was living in Europe when the Chernobyl disaster struck. The media told us we had nothing to fear since the clouds stopped at the borders. That is actually what the media reported at the time.

Ukraine was heavily criticized at the time for its deplorable management of nuclear power plants. However, even a country like Japan, with its advanced safety mechanisms and technologies, had to deal with a major incident like the one in Fukushima.

Can my colleague speak to that part of the argument we keep hearing, about the unlikelihood of a nuclear accident?

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the point I have been making throughout, that we and the companies running these things need to be prepared for the absolute worst-case scenario. To avoid the worst-case scenario is obviously the best course of action. These corporations are not public; these are corporations whose bottom lines are to make money for their shareholders. Therefore, managing risk means asking what corners they can cut. If their liability is only \$1 billion, then they might be more inclined to cut corners in the design or operation of a reactor, and that cannot happen.

We must insist that the operators be completely responsible for whatever they do, which would, in turn, make them much more conscious of avoiding the absolute worst-case scenario.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-22.

We recommend supporting the bill in principle at second reading and calling for greater liability and global best practices. Our position at third reading will depend on the government’s response.

This bill warrants further study in committee to see whether it can be improved. It will be hard to sit down with the Conservatives and improve a bill because they think they have all the answers. We know how that goes. We have seen it before.

Bill C-22 updates the Canadian nuclear liability regime and sets out the victim compensation procedures and conditions in the event of an accident at a nuclear power plant. It maintains the principles whereby operators have limited, exclusive, no-fault absolute nuclear liability, except in the event of war or terrorist attacks.

The bill increases the limit of absolute liability from \$75 million to \$1 billion. It extends the deadline for filing compensation claims for bodily injury from 10 years to 30 years to address latent illnesses. The 10-year deadline is maintained for all other types of damage.

The changes in terms of nuclear liability apply to Canadian nuclear facilities such as nuclear power plants, research reactors, fuel processing plants and facilities for managing used nuclear fuel.

Bill C-22 also updates the offshore regime for oil and gas operations, in order to prevent incidents and to guarantee a rapid response in the event of a spill. It keeps the idea of an operator’s unlimited liability in cases of demonstrated fault or negligence. It raises the absolute limit of liability for offshore oil and gas exploration projects and sets it at \$1 billion, without proof of fault. The current limit is \$40 million in Arctic waters and \$30 million in the Atlantic. The bill explicitly mentions the polluter pays principle and clearly and officially establishes that polluters will be held responsible.

The bill strengthens the current liability regime, but it does nothing to protect the environment, or Canadian taxpayers, because it still exposes them to risks.

Government Orders

The Conservatives are constantly behind our international partners and they ignore best practices when it is a matter of recognizing the dangers of an inadequate liability regime.

We have already expressed our opposition to the inadequate limits in the matter of nuclear liability. The provisions must be considered a step in the right direction in terms of the current limits, but this bill does not adequately consider the real dangers that Canadians are facing. We hope that we will be able to deal with this point in committee, if the Conservatives let us work in committee, as I was saying.

Only the NDP takes the protection of Canadians' interests seriously, while the other parties take a cavalier attitude to nuclear safety and the safety of offshore oil and gas operations.

If the nuclear energy industry is a mature one, it must pay its way. This bill continues to subsidize the industry by making taxpayers assume any financial risk in excess of \$1 billion.

Taxpayers should not have to subsidize the nuclear industry instead of subsidizing other sources of renewable energy. Other countries feel that their citizens deserve better protection in the case of a nuclear accident.

Bill C-22 has come before the House before. It was then Bill C-5, which went through the committee stage and was passed at report stage in 2008. However, it died on the *Order Paper* when the Prime Minister called an election, ignoring the fact that it was supposed to be held on a fixed date.

● (1655)

Bill C-20 made it through second reading to committee stage in 2009, but it died on the order paper when the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament. Bill C-15 was introduced in 2010 and then nothing happened for a year, until the 2011 election. This government claims that this is an important bill. Now, we have to sit until midnight until the end of June because the government says this bill is important, even though we have been talking about the same bill since 2008. All of a sudden this bill is important to the Conservatives.

The latest version of the bill does not give the public the protection it needs. Its biggest flaw is that it puts an artificial \$1 billion limit on liability, even though the costs of a serious accident can be much higher than that. Taxpayers will be stuck paying for the remaining cleanup and compensation costs. In reality, the \$1 billion limit is not enough, and imposing an artificial ceiling amounts to subsidizing energy corporations, since they will not have to cover the full costs of the risks associated with what they do.

I want to share some figures. The figure of \$1 billion for liability may seem like a lot, but it is an insufficient, arbitrary amount if we consider the costs of cleaning up nuclear disasters and marine oil spills, which have happened in the past.

In Germany, for example, nuclear liability is unlimited, fault or no fault. Germany also has financial security of \$3.3 billion Canadian per power plant. The United States has set an absolute liability limit of \$12.6 billion U.S. Other countries tend toward unlimited absolute liability.

A nuclear liability limit of \$1 billion would not have covered a fraction of the costs of the 2011 nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant. The Government of Japan estimates the cleanup costs at more than \$250 billion.

The government still brags about saving money for taxpayers and giving them a break. This same government is prepared to protect major corporations by setting the limit at \$1 billion. However, we have seen that the disasters in other countries have cost more than \$1 billion. When a disaster happens, someone has to pay. Why should Canadian taxpayers have to foot the bill for a disaster?

The NDP says that amendments will have to be put forward in committee to improve this bill. We are not against this bill, but we have to protect Canadians, who pay enough taxes already. That money is supposed to cover their own needs. The government is cutting funding for health care and all kinds of other things. Our roads are full of potholes. Everyone is mad because the government is not investing enough money in programs that people need.

The government is ready to let oil and nuclear companies get away with one heck of a deal. Their insurance should cover those costs. We cannot let them get away with not paying for insurance or paying only half as much as they should. If we do, and if a disaster happens, they will declare bankruptcy, and taxpayers will be on the hook for the bill. We have seen companies do that. As soon as the price gets too high, they declare bankruptcy. They should be the ones paying. They believe in the industry because it is profitable, so they should set money aside for possible disasters. Canadians are not the ones who should foot the bill, but that is exactly what they have to do.

The 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico could cost the company \$42 billion to clean up. The company has been sued, and there will be criminal penalties.

● (1700)

Is Canada ready to foot the bill for these companies? My answer is no.

Bill C-22 does not go far enough. We will recommend changing the numbers.

● (1705)

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what I have been hearing today reminds me of the philosophy of the *Titanic's* owners: the ship is big enough and unsinkable, so we do not even need to have enough lifeboats for everyone because there will not be a disaster.

The Conservatives' solutions seem to be wishful thinking. For example, contaminated water from the oil sands is mixed with bentonite and a polymer. Instead of having a pond full of contaminated water, you get a solid mass that you can walk on. Bentonite and all kinds of toxic substances will have to be treated. I am trying to imagine what they will do in 50 to 75 years when they want to do something with this toxic material that will be produced in unimaginable quantities. There could be millions or billions of cubic metres.

Government Orders

You cannot improvise when dealing with nuclear waste, which will pile up for 40,000, 50,000 or 80,000 years. We have to look beyond the immediate future. I would like my colleague to comment on that.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

When it comes to nuclear energy, we are still dealing with the unknown. No one wants nuclear waste in their backyard. That is not the case with electricity, which is a clean energy. No country wants to take another country's nuclear waste. Just try asking the Americans if they want our nuclear waste. They will say no. Just try asking Canadians if they want the Americans' nuclear waste. They will say no. Just try asking a province if it wants another province's nuclear waste. Everyone will say no. No one wants nuclear waste.

That will cause a problem. They have never found the answer. In the future, when we are stuck with something that we cannot get rid of, there will be no money to deal with it. That is why we have to protect ourselves.

If disaster strikes, things are even worse. Just think of what happened in Japan. Let me remind people that taxpayers had to pay for that, not the company. It is nice to own a company that can cause damage without any repercussions. The people will pay for the cleanup. However, who reaps the profits? None other than the company, which does not share the profits with the public. It shares them with its executives, who receive huge bonuses and treat themselves to millions of dollars in salaries. Nonetheless, if the company is not careful and causes damage, the taxpayers will pay.

The same thing is true of spills that can happen at sea. A spill could occur in Chaleur Bay or anywhere else. It can destroy an entire fishing industry. This is not Mexico. If a spill occurs in Chaleur Bay, it will stay in Chaleur Bay for a long time.

I say that the government must be careful and take action before this happens in order to protect the interests of Canadians.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst for his speech.

My colleague is a former miner. That makes me think of the mines being closed. The taxpayers are stuck with the waste. They have to pay to clean up the mines. The Conservatives are keen on the nuclear system. They like to beat their chests and say that they are the ones protecting taxpayers.

To describe what they are trying to do to taxpayers, there is one word I would like to use, but I will not because it is unparliamentary. I will just say that what they are trying to do is coax taxpayers into paying for nuclear waste.

Could my colleague attempt to explain why the Conservatives, who say they want to protect taxpayers, are trying to make them pay for nuclear waste?

Mr. Yvon Godin: What Canadians do not understand, in my opinion, is that the Conservatives ask for their votes and then, when they get them, they answer to Bay Street in Toronto. That is where their employers are, on Bay Street, in Toronto, just like the Liberals, actually.

As an example, I would like to talk about the paper mill in Bathurst. It had been in existence for 100 years, and someone was making money with it. The Bathurst Power and Paper Company then became Smurfit-Stone. It is incredible. The bosses exploited the forests in our area so much that there are no forests left.

When the mill closed, the bosses in question signed a contract to sell the steel, but they forgot to include disposing of the cement buildings. Now, in East Bathurst, New Brunswick, we have six cement silos and a lot of cement walls. It looks like the landscape in Iraq after the war.

The government has completely washed its hands of the matter. Now the residents are going to have to pay to get rid of it all. I am not even talking about anything nuclear. It is a simple job and it is going to cost \$3 million to get rid of, though it should have been in the contract. Normally, you get rid of the steel, you close the plant, you clean up the site and you put down some green grass so that people can at least look at something nice. Instead, we are left with a place that looks the war in Iraq was fought there.

That is what the Conservatives' bill does today. That is what we are going to get, when all is said and done. They are trying to make us believe that going from \$40 million to \$1 billion makes for a good bill. All along, though, it is a present from them to the industry. That is what they are doing.

● (1710)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the people of Sherbrooke to speak to Bill C-22, which some of my colleagues have already discussed today. I will obviously echo what has been said. As I usually do, I will say at the outset that I will be supporting the bill at second reading. I think the first thing to do is to announce how I will be voting when the time comes.

This bill is a step in the right direction, as many bills are, admittedly, although that is not always the case. Once again, there are a few flaws. The purpose of debate in the House is to discuss, debate and try to convince the people in the other parties that the bill can be improved.

Several points of interest to us will have to be examined in greater detail with experts. One of the best ways to examine a bill is to invite experts to discuss it. The other members and I often have some knowledge, but we are not experts in all fields, although every member has his or her own expertise. We cannot be experts on every subject, but we represent the people who elected us to come here and speak on their behalf. I believe the people of Sherbrooke are very interested in this because we are talking about their protection. We are talking about people who want to feel safe when they are at home and when they travel across the country. They want to be sure they are safe.

Government Orders

It is with that in mind that I rise today to speak to Bill C-22. It addresses two matters that are very simple on the surface, but more complex when we examine them further, as I had a chance to do before taking the floor. This bill concerns nuclear liability and therefore everything pertaining to nuclear energy, the way we generate energy that may at times be dangerous and for which necessary precautions must be taken to ensure that it is developed properly and as safely as possible. It also concerns liability for offshore oil and gas development, another topic of obvious interest to the people of Sherbrooke.

There are a few other details, but I will focus mainly on those two topics. We have already addressed nuclear liability and the potential dangers of nuclear energy development. Everyone watching is aware of those dangers because unfortunate accidents have occurred in the world, most recently in Fukushima, Japan. I imagine everyone here has heard about that. Another accident that dates back further occurred in Chernobyl, in eastern Europe, and caused a lot of damage, some of which is still being felt today.

The unique thing about this industry, and the danger associated with it, is this: the fallout from an accident lasts tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of years. It is therefore important that we implement mechanisms to protect people, not only those currently living in the affected area, but the future generations who will live there as well. They expect today's decision-makers to live up to their responsibilities. Obviously I will not be around in 50,000 years, even though I would very much like to be. The reality is that human life is finite.

• (1715)

I hope that humanity will always exist. If we fail today to address the long-term consequences, future generations will be left to deal with an ecological debt resulting from our mismanagement.

Unfortunately, the government is sometimes guilty of having a short-term vision. It focuses on elections and on the next five years because it wants to be re-elected. This often puts the welfare of future generations at risk because they are left to bear the consequences.

It is therefore critical that the government live up to its responsibilities in the area of energy development, more specifically the development of nuclear energy. It bears mentioning that this highly dangerous resource can be developed very responsibly. I am confident that most nuclear energy companies conduct their operations responsibly. I am not saying that they all shirk their responsibilities or try to cut corners with no regard for the consequences of their actions. I am confident that companies are mindful of the dangers associated with the resources they are handling. I hope they do everything possible to avoid unfortunate accidents.

However, human error is practically unavoidable. Mechanisms must therefore be implemented to secure the resources needed to prevent disastrous long-term consequences for future generations. Companies have a financial responsibility to protect the public and future generations when accidents occur. Serious accidents can cost hundreds of billions of dollars.

Mention was made earlier of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The cost of the cleanup is estimated at around \$40 billion, proving the importance of having mechanisms in place that require companies to cover costs when they are at fault.

This past summer, in Lac-Mégantic which is close to where I live, a company was negligent in following the rules, and perhaps the government was negligent as well. An accident occurred and once again, the taxpayers are the ones left to pick up the tab. The government is forced to cover the cost of these accidents. Private corporations think only about their profit margins and do not want to be held responsible for any accidents that happen. Governments are left to pick up the tab.

The bill now being debated makes nuclear, oil and gas companies liable for \$1 billion. It is a step in the right direction. However, in other countries, liability ceilings are much higher, or even unlimited.

• (1720)

There is thus a lot of room to improve this bill and at least try to bring in the same standards seen elsewhere around the world or, better yet, to make Canada a country that leads by example. It would be good for Canada to set an example for other countries and protect its citizens in the process.

I will be happy to answer any questions.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague clearly pointed out that \$1 billion in liability may seem like a lot to ordinary Canadians. However, in reality it is an arbitrary, insufficient amount. Other jurisdictions throughout the world have much higher limits.

My colleague may be aware that the German bank WestLB has stopped financing offshore oil projects in the Arctic. A spokesperson for the bank said:

The further you get into the icy regions, the more expensive everything gets and there are risks that are almost impossible to manage. Remediation of any spills would cost a fortune.

Could my colleague speak to that?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, which is very relevant and echoes somewhat what I was saying at the end. I did not have the time to conclude.

Yes, \$1 billion is a step in the right direction. However, some governments elsewhere are living up to their responsibilities much more than ours is and making sure that corporations pay the bill for the cleanup.

She referred specifically to the fact that some banks no longer even want to insure a corporation for the cleanup, fearing that it will cost too much money. If liability is only \$1 billion, we have to ask ourselves some questions. For example, if it costs \$3 billion or \$4 billion—for the Gulf of Mexico it was over \$40 billion—and in Canada liability is \$1 billion, who is going to pay the difference when the cost is higher? These are questions we have to ask experts. They may be able to answer.

Private Members' Business

There are other solutions as well. If I am not mistaken, in the United States they have a kind of group fund for all the companies. I cannot go into detail because I am not sufficiently familiar with it, but there are other solutions to make sure that even if the corporation goes bankrupt, there are alternatives other than having the government pay the bill.

• (1725)

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to what my colleague from Sherbrooke was just saying. He referred to the possibility that in some jurisdictions, a purely private corporation might go bankrupt and thus might have limited financial liability.

Let us take the opposite argument. Members on the other side of the House—I know my colleague followed the debates earlier—argued that some countries have much lower limits on financial liability, in the order of a few hundred million dollars. In reality, those financial liability limits are found in countries in which the corporations producing nuclear power are not private enterprises; they are often public or indirectly public. I would give the example of France, where it is Areva, formerly Framatome, which is 70% owned by the French government.

I would like my colleague from Sherbrooke to explain why it is a fallacy to use foreign examples that cannot apply, because the jurisdictions and levels of state liability and involvement are not comparable to what they are in a country in which the corporations are purely private and have to cover their financial liability themselves.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question that I would have liked to address in my speech, but now that I have been asked it, I have the opportunity to talk about it.

In fact, we could make clumsy comparisons with certain countries, because not all countries have the same energy resources. We therefore cannot compare apples and oranges.

The Conservatives tell us that these scenarios are very unlikely, that we should not worry because it will never happen, or there is virtually no chance it will happen. However, there have been times when it has happened.

I think the anecdote that my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle recounted was excellent. He said that the people in charge of the *Titanic* had not provided enough lifeboats because they said it was invincible. The ship was so big that nothing was ever going to happen to it. In the end, something did happen. They were caught short, and that led to the tragedy we all know about.

The government has to live up to its responsibilities and protect the public. That is what the people of Sherbrooke are asking for, and I hope we are going to achieve that during the study of this bill.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate. Before I recognize the hon. member for Winnipeg North, I will let him know that we only have about a couple of minutes, but we will get started, at least. Of course, he will have the remainder of his time, I would suspect, maybe in an hour or so, once we get the other business of the House dispensed with.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the notice on that.

It is interesting. Bill C-22 has been long in coming. One could argue that it has been in negotiations and under discussion since prior to the Conservatives taking office. It was initiated by the Liberal government a number of years ago. In fact, members will find it that this is, I believe, the fourth rendition of—

• (1730)

Mr. Leon Benoit: Fifth.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I have been corrected. It is the fifth rendition of this particular bill.

It is not overly controversial. It is something that, in principle, Canadians would get behind. There are some areas that we could maybe explore, such as the possibility of giving it some additional strength. We will have to see, once it gets into the committee stage.

It really adopts the idea of the polluter pays principle. We hear quite often about its importance when we have these massive industrial developments and when we talk about the issues, such as nuclear power, the way nuclear energy is used, and how we dispose of the remnants of it. They are very serious issues. International attention is given to how one should dispose of it and under what sort of conditions, but there is one thing that bears repeating, which is that we need to adopt this whole idea of polluter pays.

This is something that I hope to continue with once we have finished with private members' business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Of course, the hon. member for Winnipeg North will have eight minutes remaining for his comments when the House next resumes debate on the question and, of course, the usual five minutes for questions and comments.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should implement an energy efficiency program to encourage owners of houses, residential buildings, shops and businesses to reduce their energy consumption, with a view to: (a) combatting climate change; (b) lowering the energy bills of Canadians; and (c) creating jobs and stimulating the economy.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be here to move Motion No. 497 to support the energy efficiency of Canadian real estate owners. I have been consulting Canadians and working on this motion for a long time. I am very proud of this moment. This is why I am in politics: to bring about tangible change for my fellow citizens, as well as for my children and my future grandchildren. That is what is behind every bill I put forward, as well as this motion.

I would like to thank the member for Trois-Rivières for supporting this motion on energy efficiency. He does very good work. As it happens, Trois-Rivières is the poetry capital. The member is a singer and musician, and he is part of a group called Les Bons Jack. That makes me think of Jack Layton, whom I will talk about during my speech. This is all connected.

As I was saying, in my three years as a member, I have had the honour of meeting the people of Drummond by going door to door on several occasions. I noticed they always had three major concerns: the high cost of living, the shortage of good jobs and the environment.

They told me that the cost of living was high, particularly heating and gasoline, that they were worried about jobs and that climate change, the extinction of species, biodiversity and the loss of forests and green spaces were also concerns. People are increasingly troubled about all that.

After listening to those people, I thought of a motion that might make them happy. I also recently held a luncheon meeting on energy efficiency. Some 20 people attended, and we discussed heating costs. Last winter was very hard and very cold, and heating costs were a major concern for my constituents. Consequently, they were pleased that I was moving this motion on energy efficiency to help them pay their energy costs. They told me it would be a good idea to introduce an assistance program to help them lower their energy bills.

I am really interested in hearing what the Conservatives and Liberals will have to say in a moment. I hope they will support this very broad motion, which will help establish a free program for those who adopt it. It could be a tax credit program like eco-energy retrofit-homes, some kind of incentive measure, or it could be designed to support organizations, which I will discuss in a moment. All options are open. Consequently, I cannot see why anyone would vote against this motion. That is why I am anxious to hear from my colleagues.

That is the reason why I decided to move a motion on energy efficiency, to address the concerns of the people in Drummond and across Canada. This could help Canadians make ends meet while lowering energy costs and creating jobs for the future.

When it comes to energy efficiency, we need innovation and construction jobs. These are green jobs for the future. We must also reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, which requires a drop in energy consumption. Greenhouse gases are a very serious problem.

I came up with this motion because the greater Drummond area is teeming with expertise and innovation. It has many renowned entrepreneurs and SMEs that do good work in the area of energy efficiency.

●(1735)

There is Annexair, a leading manufacturing company that specializes in the design and construction of air handling equipment with energy recovery technologies.

Last year, I toured my riding, which has 18 municipalities, 17 of which are rural. I used the summer break to take this tour and visit this company, which has been working on energy efficiency and doing good work for a long time.

Private Members' Business

Another company that everyone probably knows is Venmar. They are known across North America. Venmar is a company from Drummondville that offers many energy efficient products, including heat recovery air exchangers for homes. The latest developments in air exchangers provide equipment that is even more energy efficient and can cut annual consumption in half. That is really very good.

There are other companies. For example, there is an excellent, innovative new company called Aéronergie that manufactures heat recovery units. I will quote its founder, Carl Binette, who conveys fine values. He explains why he started his company. This goes to show that you can start a green business—the way of the future—and be successful, create jobs and care about the environment. This is what Carl Binette had to say:

Our mission is to reduce our clients' energy consumption and consequently their greenhouse gas emissions. To that end, we use heat recovery devices that enable us to recover up to 65% of the energy consumed. We also install solar walls and collectors that recover an additional 15% to 40% of the energy...

All of this translates into significant energy savings. Companies are now equipping themselves with energy recovery devices and use them with solar panels. This technology of the future is truly fascinating.

While travelling on parliamentary business in Canada, I visited a number of other agencies and met with other individuals working in the field of energy efficiency. In particular, I met with Tim Stoate, vice-president of impact investing at the Toronto Atmospheric Fund. I mention this because I had the good fortune of meeting this individual, who had a great many ideas. He told me that when I drafted my motion, I should leave room for innovative people like the ones at the Toronto Atmospheric Fund. That is why my motion is open-ended, rather than specific. I wanted to give the government the opportunity to support initiatives by municipalities and provinces that are already doing a good job. That is what is needed from the federal government.

I would also like to mention that one of the presidents of the Toronto Atmospheric Fund during the 1990s and 2000s was the late Jack Layton. He did an excellent job and worked diligently on energy efficiency issues. I am very proud to have met them. They shared their expertise with me.

I also met with Eleanor McAteer who is involved with Toronto's tower renewal program. The focus of this very interesting and inspiring program is the creation of sustainable development and energy efficiency projects. Energy efficiency is part of a sustainable development plan. Moreover, as everyone knows, the leader of the official opposition is the father of Quebec's Sustainable Development Act.

When the NDP forms the government in 2015, it will table a federal sustainable development act that will include provisions for a sound energy efficiency program, something we really need. There is nothing to prevent the Conservatives, who will still be in power for another year, from passing this type of legislation and bringing in sound energy efficiency measures.

Private Members' Business

● (1740)

I will give a thumbnail sketch of what the energy efficiency program used to involve. From 2007 to 2012, there was the eco-energy retrofit-homes program at the federal level. Unfortunately, there has been no program, no initiative, and no support from the federal government since 2012.

As I mentioned, I have deliberately left my motion open to allow the government in power to set up whatever kind of energy efficiency program it wants.

Back in the day, 640,000 homeowners benefited from that program. They received a grant of 1,400 on average. An investment of \$934 million was made in the program over five years. It was not really very much. However, what we should bear in mind, and this is very important, is that this investment is enabling Canadians to save \$400 million a year on their energy bills.

This kind of program is not a waste of money. In fact, it is an investment that helps Canadian families.

As we know, members of the NDP have gone door to door to tell Canadian families about their plan to help them have a higher quality of life and make it easier for them to make ends meet.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives shelved that program. This is a shame because, even though it was not perfect, there were good things in it. It would really be a good idea to have a decent energy efficiency program in partnership with the provinces and municipalities. It would also be in partnership with agencies such as the ones I had a chance to meet with.

In addition, there was a significant reduction in greenhouse gases, something else that should not be overlooked. Furthermore, this program makes it possible to create jobs. Heaven knows that jobs need to be created everywhere in Canada. This is very important.

There was a reduction of 1.75 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions between 2007-08 and 2010-11, while the program was in effect. The program works, and more should be done in this regard. Furthermore, every dollar invested in an energy efficiency program generates economic benefits that are as substantial, if not more substantial, than those that come from building new power generation facilities.

It has been found that for every million dollars invested in energy efficiency measures, a minimum of 30 direct and indirect jobs are created.

A comprehensive program would help Canadians with financial difficulties to have a higher standard of living. This program would create jobs and lead to economic growth, as well as support companies with innovative products. The program could support agencies that have a lot of new ideas and that would create jobs for the future, green jobs and sustainable jobs. Furthermore, it would make it possible to improve our record on the environment.

We must improve our current environmental record. Even the officials at Environment Canada have warned the Minister of the Environment that we will not even reach the low target that the Conservatives set in Copenhagen by 2020. We must therefore put many new measures forward, and we must be more innovative. We

cannot just focus on a single policy, sector by sector. We must have a wide array of tools that will allow us to meet much more ambitious targets in terms of reducing the greenhouse gases that lead to climate change.

I would like to thank my whole family, as they are supporting me on this motion. As I mentioned, I am in politics first and foremost for my children, like everyone here.

● (1745)

We have to think about the future and our children's future. That is what is important, and that is why I am moving this motion.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate at the outset that we are quite supportive of the hon. member's initiative. We think it is a good initiative. It is a parallel to many of the initiatives we have had over the last few election cycles. Anything that goes to reduce each Canadian's carbon footprint is a good thing.

This is one of the more obvious ways in which we can reduce carbon footprints: by encouraging and incenting people to have their own living structures as energy efficient as possible.

I would be interested in knowing whether the hon. member has given some thought to how this would be costed, because frequently that is what it comes down to, and how that would have an impact on the federal budgeting process.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, who is doing good work on the environment.

It is indeed difficult to cost a program. We can use the eco-energy figures. As I was just saying, the eco-energy retrofit-homes program cost \$934 million over five years. We can therefore use that figure as a starting point, but that aspect of the motion is left deliberately open so that the government, which is in place for one more year, can decide what it wants to do and with what money. For example, it can choose to support the initiative on a technical aspect or with a tax credit. Everything is open.

What is important is that the program be offered in partnership. There are provinces, municipalities and organizations that already have programs. That is why it would be important for the future energy efficiency program to be offered in partnership. There is nothing better than being able to benefit from innovations right in the community.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the unintended consequences of governments cutting their energy efficiency programs was this. A business just outside my riding employed 30 employees who installed solar hot water systems for residents all through the city of Toronto. The company trained them, and they became efficient. They were very busy, and then both the federal Conservative government and the provincial Liberal government cancelled the assistance that went to homeowners to have this done. All 30 of these people were laid off because the market dried up. We ended up not only not having more efficient homes, but with 30 more people looking for EI.

Private Members' Business

Would the member comment on that?

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the very good work he is doing and for his question.

That is indeed what we are saying. The support that the federal government could offer would enable other small businesses to grow, and to grow in a field that is developing for the future.

We give about \$1.3 billion in subsidies for fossil fuels. If we transferred a portion of that money to an energy efficiency program, we would create far more jobs.

We are talking about 30 direct and indirect jobs for every \$1 million invested in energy efficiency. It is said that \$1 invested in an energy efficiency program generates economic benefits that are as great as, if not greater than, the benefits generated by building regular energy facilities.

That is why we have to rethink how we see the economy. The economy and the environment go hand in hand, and beyond that, the economy and the environment are the future. They are the jobs of the future, and sustainable jobs.

If an energy efficiency program is put in place by the NDP government in 2015, I am certain that the program will support initiatives like the ones my colleague talked about in the solar industry.

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really am happy to be rising today to speak to the NDP member's motion on improving energy efficiency in homes.

I want to say that I do not really know yet whether I am going to support his motion, but at least it is a more substantial type of motion for improving energy efficiency as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions than some of the other ideas that have been put forward by his own party. For example, the carbon tax proposal would cost Canadians \$22 billion and would probably do nothing, or very little, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This would be a much more concrete and beneficial type of program. It is certainly better than what the former Liberal government did, which was sign on to Kyoto, which was supposed to save the world, save the environment, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but instead of reducing greenhouse gas emissions over the next decade, they proceeded to increase greenhouse gas emissions by 30%.

That kind of an idea really does not cut it. At least this idea is something worth debating and worth talking about. I am looking forward to the debate over the next few hours in the days to come.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to talk about what our government has done to make Canada a global leader when it comes to responsible energy use. Our government has a strong track record in improving our country's energy use and in putting money back in the pockets of Canadians.

It is not just me saying that. In 2013, the International Energy Agency recognized Canada as a world leader in improving energy use. Canada tied for second, with the United Kingdom, right behind

Germany, as leading the world in energy efficiency improvements between 1990 and 2010.

Through the eco-energy efficiency initiative, the Government of Canada is investing \$195 million to help Canadians use energy more efficiently at home, at work, and on the road to continuously reduce energy consumption across the country. That is something we are doing already.

The goals of the initiative are simple: more energy-efficient homes, cleaner transportation, improved energy standards for products and appliances, and better building codes. In addition, the initiative creates jobs, stimulates the economy, helps protect the environment, and delivers enormous cost savings for business and consumers. For example, vehicle consumption labels are helping Canadians by providing more information about the fuel consumption of vehicles when they buy cars. This is a much needed improvement.

Our government has announced that we are introducing new fuel consumption ratings for cars and light trucks for model years starting in 2015, which is the next model year. These new ratings will better simulate everyday driving conditions and cold weather operation, which significantly affect fuel consumption. In addition, an updated label will be posted on the model year 2016 to provide more accurate fuel consumption information. The new label will provide the estimated fuel consumption and the expected annual fuel consumption for a vehicle. This will put in very simple terms what a particular vehicle a consumer may be planning to purchase can be expected to cost in terms of fuel consumption costs from operating that vehicle.

Canadians will be able to use the label to compare vehicle fuel consumption information and to identify the most fuel-efficient new vehicles. The 2016 label will also be tailored to address new emergent technologies, such as battery-electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, extending it beyond the internal combustion engine.

We know that the transportation sector currently generates nearly one-quarter of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions. That is why our government is already taking action by introducing world-class emissions standards for cars and light trucks. These new regulations will greatly improve fuel efficiency.

By 2025, new cars will consume 50% less fuel and emit 50% less greenhouse gas emissions than similar 2008 models, so it is a reduction of 50% from 2008 to 2025. That is a real reduction, and it is very meaningful indeed.

• (1755)

Our strategy is working. Canada's 2020 greenhouse gas emissions are projected to be 128 megatonnes lower than if no action were taken.

Private Members' Business

We are also providing Canadian drivers and truckers with fuel-saving tips through the autosmart driver training program. Another program involves taking steps to help consumers make more informed choices about energy when they purchase home appliances by referring to the Energy Star labels. Energy Star labels now identify more than 65 product categories, including appliances, electronics, heating and cooling equipment, lights, and so on. These labels are for the top 15% to 30% in energy performance. We continue to introduce higher energy performance standards and better labelling to help consumers make smart energy choices.

Another way the Government of Canada promotes responsible energy use is by encouraging Canadians to make energy-conscious renovations to their homes. We are already doing this. Since 2007, our government has provided more than \$934 million in grants under the eco-energy homes program. This is something our government has already done. One in 20 Canadian households, or 640,000 homeowners, received an incentive to make their homes more energy efficient. Collectively, these Canadians are saving \$400 per year on their energy bills.

When we look at the package this Conservative government has put together, we see it is similar in many ways to the packages former Conservative governments have put together. These packages are different from what was put out and implemented by the former Liberal government, and of course we have not had any former New Democratic governments federally in this country, but they would have the same type of programs, which say nice things but really accomplish very little.

The proof of this is that the Sierra Club chose as the greenest prime minister in Canadian history former Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. That is because the type of program he put in place to deal with environmental issues and not just say nice things really did make a difference. That is why the Sierra Club, which was an organization that pretty much beat up on Conservative governments when they were in power, had to admit after the fact that in fact it was these Conservative governments that had actually done the most when it came to improving the environment.

I am willing to make a friendly bet that 20 or 30 years down the road, when a group like the Sierra Club chooses the next greenest prime minister in Canadian history, it will choose the current Prime Minister of Canada. That is who they will choose, because the reality is that Conservatives put in place programs that really work. We do not necessarily say words that sound pretty, but we get the job done and we protect the environment, and that is what we are going to continue to do.

In closing, I want to say that I certainly will consider this motion by this member, because it is far above what has been presented by former Liberal governments and so far above other ideas, like the carbon tax, that have been put forward by the NDP and by the member's party. At least this is something we can truly look at, debate, and make a decision on.

● (1800)

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech. His speech was really quite interesting, and I am—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, there will be no questions or comments. I apologize.

ROYAL ASSENT

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

May 29, 2014

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 29th day of May, 2014, at 5:03 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace
The Secretary to the Governor General
and Herald Chancellor

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1805)

[English]

ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

The House resumed consideration of Motion No. 497.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate. I want to commend my hon. colleague for his initiative in putting this motion forward.

Having listened to the hon. member from Vegreville, I feel as though I am living in some parallel universe. I do not know if you are a fan of Harry Potter, Mr. Speaker, but Lord Voldemort is the arch-enemy of Harry Potter. Lord Voldemort's name cannot actually be mentioned. He is referred to as "he who must not be named". Similarly, with this government climate change is the phrase that must not be named under any circumstances. We will never hear that phrase pass from the lips of the Prime Minister or a minister or a member of the Conservative caucus, because they are in full-bore denial. That has had huge consequences for us.

May I suggest the hon. members read Mr. Waldie's article in *The Globe and Mail*, headed "Canada dead last in ranking for environmental protection"?

CBC news says, "Canada's reputation worsens: global poll". As well, there is "Canada receives a "C" grade in environmental performance and ranks 15th out of 17 peer countries".

The Canadian Press says, "Canada ranks worst on climate policy among industrialized countries: reports". Another headline says, "Canada's Climate Policy Worst in Developed World".

Private Members' Business

What is next, Ezra Levant in Sun Media? Even he might actually recognize that climate change is a very significant issue.

I just came from the environment committee, where one of the hon. members on the Conservative side was basically saying that we are only 2% of the problem, so why do anything? That is, frankly, the government's attitude: why bother with anything, because we are only a small part. It is kind of beggar your neighbour: I am not going to do anything, so he is not going to do anything, and as a consequence nothing gets done.

The consequence of the consequence is that we sit in a kind of stunned silence while climate change descends upon us.

The insurance industry, on the other hand, has figured it out and is actually re-pricing insurance products based upon the reality of climate change, the reality that the government wishes to deny.

Interestingly, Conservatives are still in full denial mode, even though they shelled out \$2.6 billion last year in order to cover off the climate-induced catastrophic weather events in Calgary, Toronto, and other places.

If we look at the trend line put forward by the insurance companies, we will see that it is just going straight up, yet rather than actually dealing with mitigation and adaptation measures, the Conservatives would rather be shelling into the disaster relief fund and paying out that way. This is going to keep on keeping on until the taxpayers just get so weary of these guys that they give them the heave-ho.

One of the reasons the government was not able to balance its budget last year, and it should have been able to, was that it had to shell out \$2.6 billion, which ended up as a \$2 billion hit on the fiscal framework.

Going back to the motion, what I like about it is that it is an encouragement for us all to reduce our carbon footprint.

Climate change is a bit difficult for people to get their heads around. These great honking chunks of ice in Antarctica and the Arctic are dropping into the sea, and it is difficult to understand what that actually means. One would have thought that the Minister of the Environment would figure it out, since her riding is in a low area and one of the consequences of rising sea levels, which NASA, *National Geographic*, and pretty well any learned scientist say are going to be in the order of four metres, is that the low coastline areas will be flooded.

I congratulate the minister on her creation of parks, but she will discover fairly shortly that a lot of those parks will become marine parks. That will be a consequence of not in any meaningful way addressing climate change, which is upon us regardless of what the Prime Minister and the ministers of the Conservative caucus actually believe.

• (1810)

I particularly like the emphasis on the lowering of energy bills for Canadians. When there was a program, my wife and I took advantage of it. We did some replacement of windows and some extra insulation. I think we either got a tax credit or a significant sum of money to compensate for that initiative. We did see a change the

quantity of heat that we used over the course of the year. I suppose the quantity of energy is a better way of putting it.

In this past year we also did more insulation of another property that we own by installing sliding doors and things of that nature. Of course, there is no grant program available. The hon. member said that the government put all this money into a grant program, but he neglected to mention that government killed the program in 2010. Here we are in 2014, and there is no program available. The consequence is that Canadians are largely on their own in trying to improve energy efficiency.

The other interesting aspect of this motion is with respect to creating jobs and stimulating the economy. I had the good fortune recently to be in Prince Edward County, which is just near the Trenton-Belleville area. I did a tour there, and members would be interested to know that there is a half a billion dollars' worth of installation of solar panels in that county alone. It is half a billion dollars' worth, and it feeds into the grid.

The Conservatives in Ontario get all bent out of shape because of the cost of hydro. Of course it is escalating. There is no denying it. Trying to pull out of coal-fired energy generation costs money. One of the ways of getting that energy replaced is through solar. In order to be able to make it a viable program, it has to be paid for, and here we have half a billion dollars' worth of installation of solar panels that will feed into Ontario's energy tariff. That would be one of the areas where I would see this motion could be helpful and useful.

Once we get past the motion, the real issue is the will and the design of the program, whether it is writing a cheque or creating tax credits or things of that nature. That gets us into the nitty-gritty of proper policy design. The hon. member was quite candid in saying that what he wants to do is encourage the House and the government to set up a realistic program that will encourage and incent taxpayers, homeowners, and business owners to do something about their carbon footprint.

All of that is to be lauded and encouraged. I like the idea of a retrofit program. I see that we are carrying one on here in the parliamentary precinct, and my guess is that it is costing more than a million dollars. We are taking energy-wasteful buildings and turning them into energy-efficient buildings. I am assuming that the design of the program here on Parliament Hill will ultimately save the Parliament of Canada significant sums of money in energy.

I like this motion. I encourage hon. members to support the motion. It does get climate change out of the dirty little closet that the government wishes to put in. It may change the dialogue from the silliness about a carbon tax and all that nonsense that the Conservatives regularly spout. It may help reduce the carbon footprint of Canadians, and it certainly will create jobs. Prince Edward County is a classic example.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, please interrupt me when my time is up, because, with such an exciting topic as this, which deals with energy efficiency, of course, and all the other environmental aspects, the old teacher in me is back. I feel like I could go on for hours.

Private Members' Business

In passing, I would like to commend my colleague from Drummond for introducing his motion and say hello to all the people of Drummondville, particularly those I had the opportunity to work with during my four years there. I have fond memories of that time.

To come back to the motion, just this once, I will start my speech by quoting a Conservative minister. His remarks support the motion before us. In 2013, the former minister of natural resources, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, wrote:

From 2007 to 2012, the ecoENERGY Retrofit—Homes program provided incentives to more than 640 000 homeowners. As a result of this program, these homeowners are now...lowering their energy consumption by an average of 20 percent. It is estimated that this program...created or protected thousands of jobs...

That is an excellent summary of this motion. They say the simplest things are often the most effective. Here is an excellent example of that saying. This is an utterly simple motion, but one that allows for numerous applications and offers many positives. I will have occasion to talk about that more.

Of course, it all hinges on monetary incentives. We are living in a time when we have never been more aware of environmental issues or discussed them as much, unless perhaps you are a Conservative. However, people around the world are talking about them. When the time comes for action, money often talks.

If you ask Canadians who are getting ready to buy a new car whether they are interested in a hybrid model, most will answer yes. However, when financing a hybrid car, they are forced to run the calculations over several years to determine whether, given the energy costs of a conventional vehicle, they can come up with the extra money they need to buy it. That is where a government that really has an energy vision designed to reduce greenhouse gases, but also to develop a society of the future, can put major incentives in place.

The eco-energy retrofit—homes program was a very successful program. I say that in the past tense because the Conservatives decided in January 2013 to terminate it. That is a strange policy. The Conservatives had a functional program for once, and I thought they could have continued in the right direction.

In an evaluation in 2010, the head of the program concluded that its residential component had been successful because it had helped reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions while boosting the economy. That is pretty important, particularly when we are talking about renovation work in homes, apartment buildings or any type of building.

However, private homeowners in particular often have the same problem as people with the hybrid cars I mentioned a moment ago. Sometimes they are tempted to do the work, but when they see the size of the bill—let us not deny the fact—some absolutely have to do the work and will try to find someone who will do it for cash. That is where things go downhill and people start dealing with the whole underground economy that escapes us. However, we can get it back by introducing incentives to encourage all people who do retrofit work to do business in the legal economy.

Why did they cancel it? What reason did they have to abolish a program that worked so well? Perhaps it was to save money. That, in

a word, is the Conservative government's policy: saving money. I should say making cuts. In normal circumstances, however, savings should be used for good programs. It looks as though Conservative government has not really understood that. The fact remains that the Conservatives' record on energy and the environment is terrible. We all know it.

• (1820)

Need I remind hon. members that there are some specific policy issues that Canada has backed away from? Canada is still the only country to have pulled out of the Kyoto Protocol at the UN Conference on Climate Change in 2011, is it not? That feat did not do our country proud.

The elimination of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy in 2012 is a clear reflection of the Conservatives' position. They are willing to talk about the environment if they are asked a question, but it is not an area in which they are truly willing to take action.

The NDP, on the other hand, wants to move forward, particularly in terms of investing in measures to fight climate change and to help Canadians reduce their energy consumption and lower their energy bills. That is the crucial element.

We can engage in a conversation with each citizen and clearly show them how, by spending some money and with a little help from the program, they can lower their energy bills over the next few years. What is more, not only will they be able to recoup the investment they made in renovations in the short term, they will also be able to benefit from lower energy bills for years to come, while doing their part to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

With this reasoning, it will not be difficult to convince people who have to do some renovations or who are building a new house to adopt higher environmental standards.

The purpose of the motion is not new and does not require a radical shift in policy. The motion simply calls on the government to adopt a real policy for the future, a policy that takes into account the environmental challenges of tomorrow.

We, on this side of the House, are convinced that climate change is tied to human activity. Some of the activities that contribute significantly to global warming include heat loss and energy waste. Every study bears this out—as if we needed studies to know this is true. The cheapest kilowatt hour or energy is the energy we manage to save because it has already been produced and can be used later.

What the motion is proposing today is therefore very simple. By contributing to improving the energy efficiency of houses, residential buildings, shops and businesses, we will be contributing to combatting climate change.

In light of the global climate crisis, reducing greenhouse gases by putting an energy efficiency program in place will reduce our ecological footprint.

Private Members' Business

If there is one idea that I often talked to my students about, it was the importance of reducing our ecological footprint. If there is one generation we can count on to truly change things, it is the younger generation. There are many examples of this throughout history.

For example, how did we manage to reduce smoking rates in our societies? It was because of the children and teenagers who were able to persuade their parents to stop smoking, and because young people did not start smoking. How did we manage to increase our recycling rates? It was because of the children and teenagers who persuaded their parents to recycle.

Today, I think it would return the favour very well if we, the politicians, stood up when the time comes, after the second hour of debate on this motion, and voted unanimously to send a clear message to all those generations who are prodding us forward. We would be telling them that we have understood the message and that we want to leave them a society and an environment that is as clean as the one we received from our parents, or even cleaner, in terms of both air and water quality.

In conclusion, the NDP has long been a party that looks to the future. We put forward this motion, that we implement an energy efficiency program to encourage homeowners to reduce their energy consumption, as part of our effort to combat climate change. This strategy will also make it possible to reduce Canadians' energy bills and create jobs. This is another important element: whenever we talk about creating jobs in the energy sector, we are no longer necessarily talking about creating jobs in the service industry that are often part-time, minimum-wage jobs. Rather, we are talking about full-time, high paying jobs.

• (1825)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Yukon. I advise the member that he will have just five minutes for his speech before time expires for the debate this evening.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak to this topic. It is great to follow on the heels of the opposition members when they talk about our government's record on care and concern for the environment.

I am just going to take the five minutes I have to highlight some of the things we have done, and maybe refresh the member's memory on some of the excellent initiatives our government has made in terms of energy efficiency, climate change, and the work we have done as a government to ensure that our environmental priorities remain high in this country, and to remind the members that, in each and every case that we have put those initiatives forward, the opposition has voted against those measures.

The member who just spoke talked about the home retrofit program. He said it was a beautiful program. It was so beautiful that when it was introduced the New Democrats voted against it. Now of course they are calling for its return. It is ironic that they will talk about these programs that they voted against as though they were part and parcel of the development of them, and clearly that is not the case.

I am proud to say that as Yukon's member of Parliament, just last year I was able to announce half a million dollars over two years out

of the eco-energy fund for projects in our communities, and some of those projects were for climate change adaptation. When those initiatives were put forward in this House, the opposition members voted against them. They voted against the funds for those excellent projects. Therefore, while they say that the Conservative government has not done anything for the environment or is not interested in energy efficiency, that is absolutely not the case. What is the case is that every single time we put those initiatives forward, the opposition members vote against them.

I have travelled around the Yukon, opening up excellent and much-needed affordable homes across our territory, homes for seniors in communities like Dawson City, Watson Lake, and Haines Junction. Each one of those large property developments not only created jobs, economic opportunity, and valuable home projects, but they were also built to SuperGreen standards. High-energy-efficiency homes, the latest in technology, are great for the Yukon, great for the community, great for Canada, and a great standard to set. Sadly again, when the government put forward those initiatives to build those homes in economic action plans 2010, 2011, and 2012, the opposition members voted against that critical spending.

They voted against affordable homes. They voted against eco-energy retrofit programs. Then they stood in the House today and said that, first, we should resurrect those programs, and second, that we are not doing anything. However, the record is clear. Those SuperGreen standards for those homes have been great.

Let me quickly mention the national conservation plan. We heard the member opposite talking about climate change being just man made, just from human influence. Of course there are factors, and we take this into account. However, there are natural factors that can contribute to climate change; water vapour and volcanic eruptions are good examples. Also there are natural forces that can help reduce climate change. I will talk about that quickly, but if volcanic eruptions have some contribution, I am sure the whole House is wondering what on earth bozo eruptions could do in terms of GHG emissions in our country. We will save that discussion for a later day, and I will just say this.

On that national conservation plan, we are protecting wetlands, which are important carbon sinks. Since 2010, our government has increased boreal forest protection right across this nation, and boreal forests are important carbon capture mechanisms in the climate change discussion. However, when we made investments in boreal forest protection, opposition members voted against it. When we make investments in the national conservation plan and as we move forward under strategies to fund eco-energy programs and natural conservation programs, we can bank on it that time and again, sadly, that the opposition members will vote against those strategies and the government will stand behind them.

I am just proud to say that the work we are doing today will continue into the future. It is great work for Canadians and most certainly great work for my territory.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

●(1830)

*[English]***ENERGY SAFETY AND SECURITY ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Winnipeg North will have eight minutes to complete his speech.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I began by talking about how important it is that we have legislation of this nature brought forward. I talked about how the government has been really sitting back and doing very little in terms of advancing the legislation, and this legislation has been needed for a good number of years. In fact, the government has attempted to introduce it in the past, but to date it has consistently failed to ultimately get it passed through the chamber.

We, within the Liberal Party, have been very supportive, in principle, of getting this legislation to the committee stage because there are many different aspects of the legislation that have a great deal of merit. In fact, the record will show that back in the days when Paul Martin was the prime minister, there was a great deal of discussion, and that is when the negotiations started with respect to really moving forward with the legislation we have here today.

However, they have been somewhat moving at a turtle's pace, if I can put it that way, in terms of advancing this type of legislation.

That is not to say that the legislation is perfect. In fact, it is far from perfect. However, we do believe the principle of it justifies our acknowledging and allowing the bill to go to committee.

It is one of those bills on which the government was determined to put time allocation, and we are not too sure why, because, at least from within the Liberal Party's perspective, we were quite content to see it move on without even having to require time allocation or the government's decision to move closure on it.

I just want to point out a couple of aspects of the legislation before I make some general comments on it.

In part 1, for example, it expresses and includes the whole idea of the polluter pays principle. This is something that is consistent in terms of the whole notion of liability of fault of operators, and in fact something very important for us to recognize.

Another aspect of it is that it provides that an applicant for an authorization for drilling or development of production of oil and gas must demonstrate that it has the financial resources required to pay the greatest amount of limits of liability that could apply to it. It is very important that we recognize that.

It is one thing to say to a company, "You know, if things go wrong, you're going to be held liable for it", only to find out that, in a worst-case scenario, something does go wrong and the company folds or does not have the ability to adequately compensate.

There would be substantial increases put into place through this legislation, so we have to ensure that it is in fact doable.

I have had the opportunity to listen to a number of New Democrats speak to the bill. Do they want to see it ultimately pass? I am not sure. I will have to wait to find out what their position is on the legislation.

The reason I pose that is that I think it is important that we recognize that certain industries would be profoundly impacted by the legislation.

I will start off, at this point, by talking about our oil and gas sector and how the legislation would have an impact in our Atlantic provinces that want to see this development.

Within the Liberal caucus, we have, I would say, super fantastic members of Parliament from that Atlantic region. They are concerned about the environment. Let there be no doubt about that. However, they also are concerned about economic opportunities. They want to see jobs for their constituents, jobs for their provinces. We recognize that the oil and gas industry has just phenomenal potential for generating economic opportunities.

●(1835)

This is something that we take quite seriously within the Liberal Party. We believe that through these opportunities, the biggest benefactors would be all Canadians. It would be our middle class. Everyone would benefit from it.

We want to ensure that we have good, solid laws and regulations that would protect our environment and our taxpayers through ensuring that we have larger fine capabilities and more consequences for companies that are irresponsible. We want to ensure that when disasters occur, there is going to be a break so that the taxpayer is not going to foot the bill. Equally, we want to see economic development in the regions across Canada materialize and improve the quality of life for all Canadians.

This is a very important issue. Members will see that there are provincial governments and agencies watching what is taking place on this issue. They are even looking beyond the legislation, at what else the government is doing to foster that.

The legislation would harmonize the environmental assessment process for projects for which the National Energy Board, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, or the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board is the responsible authority, as defined within the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act of 2012.

The point is that we need to take a look at environmental assessment and how it is conducted in Canada. How do we make sure that we are able to move forward in that area?

I see that I only have one minute left. I wanted to make a personal comment regarding the nuclear industry. I have done this, and I will hopefully continue a little bit more this evening, because we need to recognize the benefits of our nuclear industry. At the same time, we have to ensure that the safety of Canadians and our environment are a high priority. We are not convinced that this is the case with the government.

Government Orders

I would like to conclude my comments by emphasizing the importance of nuclear medicine and how that is growing at a rapid pace. It is literally saving lives. Whether it is radiation for cancer treatment or diagnostic work, we will find that medical needs that depend on our nuclear research and industry as a whole are absolutely critical. Our nuclear plants play a critical role as well, and it is important that we have the right safety environment for all of that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is very pleased to see Bill C-22 introduced. We have major concerns that will have to be examined in committee.

In Canada, the liability limit for nuclear plant operators has not changed since 1976, so it is 38 years old. The liability limit for offshore oil and gas operators has been the same for more than 25 years. We need to amend our laws so that they are modern and better suited to our present situation.

I would like to know why the Liberals waited decades without doing anything on this issue and without amending these laws to provide better protection for our environment. I would also like to know whether my Liberal colleague is in favour of giving subsidies to the nuclear power industry to reduce the risks associated with it.

● (1840)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is a comment often given by New Democrats on any and all pieces of legislation. It is almost as if they get a star if somehow they can incorporate the Liberal Party into their question in a negative fashion.

It is important to recognize that, with time, things do change. I could equally ask my colleague if the New Democrats introduced a private member's bill on this issue 20 years ago, or was it not an important enough issue back then?

The point is, things change through time. I pointed out that it was a Liberal administration that initiated the discussion and brought forward the idea that we needed to look at how we could make these changes. I believe the record would show that the Liberal Party has been fairly supportive of this legislative going through in a more timely fashion, because we recognize the government has not done a good job in passing the legislation. This is the fourth time that we are seeing legislation of this nature. Some suggested it is maybe even the fifth time. I know it is at least four times and the government has not been able to do it.

The session does come to an end, at least to a summer break. It would be wonderful if we tried to get something in place to modernize this.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was engaged in this debate going back to one of the first iterations of the bill. It became very clear on the nuclear side that we were trying to establish a liability limit that would fit with what the international community would accept rather than what Canadians need for their own protection.

That is what was going on at the time in 2007 when this first came out. We were trying to establish the lowest possible liability limit that would satisfy the requirements of the U.S., especially the U.S.,

because if a U.S. company invests in another country and its environmental standards are not high enough, then the U.S. company is judged under the U.S. standards, which are much higher, so there was a problem at the time in trying to move nuclear industries into foreign hands.

Does my colleague think that this type of situation, where we are more concerned about what is the least possible liability that this nuclear industry can bear in order to satisfy international standards, is the way to go with this legislation, or should it be actually looking at what is proper liability for Canadians, to protect them and to protect the government in the event of a nuclear calamity?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my biggest concern is that we make sure that whenever we see the development of it, that there is enough there that we can draw out the money that is required.

This, I understand, would bring Canada in line with the International Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage, which was fairly recently established, back in December 2013. I believe that to be the case.

Is that enough? We will find out. We hope we will not find out because of a disaster.

● (1845)

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues in the House may very well know that my riding of Pontiac is across the river from Chalk River, so this particular issue is of concern not only to me personally but also to all my constituents who would be, in the eventuality of some kind of failure at Chalk River, affected quite drastically. We have to think, of course, of the events of several decades ago in Chernobyl and more recently Fukushima. There is probably no Canadian in this country who does not feel like those types of events should not happen in Canada.

The reality is that we need to make sure that our legislation is robust and that there are liability provisions that make sense and would ensure that Canadians like the good Pontiacers I represent would be protected.

This legislation would do a number of things. It also talks about offshore oil liability, which is perhaps a bit less of a concern in the Pontiac, given that we have lots of lakes and rivers and great fishing, but the ocean is quite far away.

Nonetheless, I remember watching television one night with my two beautiful daughters. One of those commercials came on showing a number of animals struggling under the weight of oil from an oil spill. They were smeared with oil. What is interesting and maybe even innate in human beings is their sympathy with animals in that situation. Both of my daughters were immediately concerned because it was a small seabird. They said, "Dad, that's terrible." They immediately recognized that this kind of tragedy should not occur.

Oil spills of that magnitude have ecological consequences, but they have human consequences as well, particularly on those living near shores and those who are affected either by the fishery or economically.

Government Orders

It is clear that the reasoning for liability is strong. While this particular legislation is an improvement upon the current liability regime, I certainly feel that the proposal is insufficient to protect Canadians and the environment. In fact, it will continue potentially in its incrementalism to continue to put Canadian taxpayers at risk because the amounts here for liability are just too low. There is a financial dimension to the bill, and it is clear that the Conservatives have given it somewhat of a token treatment. The government has consistently fallen behind our international partners and has ignored best practices that are already in place when it comes to recognizing the dangers of inadequate liability regimes.

I would like my Conservative colleagues to tell me what research went into this. What consultation went into this? Where is the science to show that these measures may do something to help? It is hard to oppose oneself to a good thing when it is not good enough, but at least it is good.

The NDP has opposed the insufficient nuclear liability limits in the past. We have a long history of doing so. While the provisions in the bill should be considered a step forward compared to current liability limits, the bill does not significantly address some real risks facing Canadians and facing, as I mentioned, some of my constituents. We on this side of the House and my particular political party are serious about protecting the interests of ordinary Canadians.

• (1850)

The Conservatives have a cavalier attitude toward this type of nuclear safety and offshore oil and gas development. Their intimate relationship with the oil and gas industry in our country opens them up to a certain amount of influence with regard to keeping some of the legislation minimal. It is kind of a minimalistic approach to regulating the oil and gas sector, which unfortunately puts Canadians in danger.

Nuclear power is a mature industry. If it is a mature industry and a profit-making one, to a certain extent it should pay for itself. The bill continues to subsidize the nuclear industry by making taxpayers liable for a nuclear risk beyond \$1 billion. Why is that? It is something that can be profitable and it is something that has proven itself, to a certain extent, with respect to an energy source. Though there are fundamental issues with regard to nuclear waste, there still remain fundamental issues with storing it. Nonetheless, it is a viable and mature industry, so why would taxpayers be liable for risks beyond \$1 billion? If the Conservatives were serious about a robust set of liability measures, then they would have liberated taxpayers a bit more from footing the bill with respect to nuclear risk.

Taxpayers should not be on the hook for subsidies to nuclear energy. Despite having been sold off for some reason, in every budget AECL gets millions of dollars. I do not get that. What kind of contract did we have with it from the beginning? The government sells something off, but then it keeps putting millions of dollars into it. Either it has been improved and it has used those dollars in a transitional way to improve AECL installations, or it is corporate welfare. To a certain extent the government has to let go. Those millions could be put into social programs that could affect the lives of Canadians. For example, we just mentioned employment insurance. I do not know how much it is, but we could give \$225

million to AECL every day or put it somewhere else. I think one wonders what is going on at AECL that it keeps needing money from the federal government.

Other countries also have deemed that their citizens deserve much higher protection in the event of a nuclear accident. We should obviously be following the international norms and best practices with respect to liability.

If the government truly believed in the polluter pays principle, then taxpayers should not hold the risk for these types of energy projects. If we measure risk accordingly and assign liability, then industry will improve its safety practices. That is a logical two plus two equals four calculation.

We need to reduce the likelihood of catastrophic events, which nobody wants in our country. The suffering of the people in Fukushima indicates the severity of what can go on in any country that uses nuclear energy. Heaven forbid that anything like that would happen here.

As I have said before, we need to study global best practices and ensure that the federal government puts Canadians first.

Also, the Canadian government should prepare a comprehensive assessment of the risks posed by nuclear power plant operations in Canada, the opportunities for reducing that risk and the accompanying risk costs and risk reduction costs. We have not seen any of that study brought to parliamentarians and Canadians.

The Canadian government should be engaging publicly with a wide range of stakeholders to discuss risks and options to improve nuclear liability. I am sure the constituents in my riding would approve and would like to be consulted with respect to what they think the risks are. We must review the liability regime regularly. Therefore, there have to be some regularly scheduled reviews.

It is completely unacceptable that the Conservatives and Liberals waited decades to address this issue.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

He mentioned a number of points, and I would like to hear his views on the fact that economic development and increased liability are not contradictory; in fact, the opposite is true. Norway, a leader in offshore oil development, is an example of this. The unlimited absolute liability regime that Norway has established does not appear to have paralyzed its industry.

Does my colleague agree, and can he comment further?

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. One would say that the Conservatives assume that if we bring in this kind of measure to protect Canadians, we will be making our industries less competitive, which is not necessarily the case.

Government Orders

The people in these industries simply want to know what rules they have to follow and how to follow them. They will follow the rules and find a way to be competitive within these measures that are intended to protect Canadians.

The Scandinavian countries are proof of this. It seems to me that we should take the time to study best practices at the international level and perhaps we could even be inspired by them. Unfortunately, it is difficult to do this with a time allocation motion, which I deplore, on an issue that is as fundamental and as important as the safety of Canadians.

Mr. Tarik Brahmī (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with regard to what my colleague has just said about international comparisons, I have heard a wide range of comments this afternoon. One Conservative member was saying that the limited liability in certain countries was lower, financially, than \$1 billion of liability. He was making a comparison between what may be true in certain administrations or certain legislative frameworks and Canada.

However, what this argument overlooks, and what is a complete fallacy in my view, is that in some countries safety, including nuclear safety, is provided by companies that are not privately owned, but belong to the government through government agencies that take care of nuclear safety or state-owned companies, depending on the legislative framework. These companies allow these states to take full responsibility. These are countries where the government has decided to take responsibility for an energy source that, to them, is much more important than in Canada.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on the fact that we cannot compare levels of financial liability in countries where the administrations are organized differently. In one country, the nuclear industry is private, while in others, it is almost a public resource.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question, which is very clear and well balanced.

Clearly, we must pay attention. Regardless of the situation, we cannot compare apples and oranges. This shows the extent to which the government has not conducted the necessary research and the extent to which it does not understand the specificities or the subtleties of the issue or the practices in place beyond Canada's borders. Clearly, the private and public sectors cannot be compared in this way.

Of course, a much more in-depth analysis, not just a superficial one, must be conducted. This bill must be improved to ensure that it is more rigorous and that it really protects the interests of our constituents.

● (1900)

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House this evening to participate in the debate on Bill C-22, An Act respecting Canada's offshore oil and gas operations, enacting the Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act, repealing the Nuclear Liability Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts.

As we can see, the bill has quite a long title, but I will explain a little of what it contains. I am going to support the bill at second reading, but not because it is perfect, far from it. Actually, it is

typical Conservative work, never perfect. However, it can be sent to committee so that amendments can be proposed.

Specifically, we are going to call for broader responsibilities and the implementation of best practices from around the world. Our position at third reading will depend on this government's willingness to work with us in committee and to consider the amendments proposed by the official opposition.

People watching at home on CPAC are probably aware that we are sitting until midnight tonight. We are very pleased to be working until midnight; my colleagues often work very hard. What bothers me is that the Conservatives never seem to want to listen to our concerns. This evening, I see that the benches opposite are almost empty. Our feeling is that there is no real willingness on the part of the Conservatives to participate in this debate in a constructive manner.

The Conservatives did not ask very many questions about any of the most recent speeches. Unfortunately, no more Conservatives will speak tonight. Conservative members are not seizing the opportunity they have to speak about Bill C-22, which is going to have a considerable effect on Canadians' quality of life.

Bill C-22 has two major parts. The first deals with nuclear liability. Bill C-22 updates Canada's nuclear liability regime and specifies the conditions and the procedure for compensating victims in the event of an accident at a nuclear power station.

This decades-old regime must be updated; Canada's nuclear liability regime must be modernized. I warmly welcome the changes that Bill C-22 will make, but, as I will explain later, I have some concerns about the details.

The second part of Bill C-22 updates the Canadian liability regime with respect to offshore oil and gas development in order to prevent incidents and ensure rapid response in case of a spill.

Even though we support the changes that Bill C-22 would make to a decades-old regime, I want to raise some concerns that my NDP colleagues have already raised in the House.

We are especially concerned about the fact that the Government of Canada is adopting much weaker regulations than those in effect in other countries. We have already expressed our opposition to inadequate nuclear liability limits. Unfortunately, this bill does not really take into account the real risks facing Canadians.

● (1905)

As everyone knows, the NDP is in favour of the polluter pays principle. This means that companies, individuals and organizations that pollute our environment are liable for the cost of cleaning up environmental damage.

The NDP is the only party that is willing to stand up for Canadians' interests. The other parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, do not seem all that concerned about nuclear safety and offshore oil and gas development.

If the nuclear power industry really is mature, it should pay its own way. As written, this bill continues to subsidize this industry by passing the financial risk in excess of \$1 billion on to taxpayers.

Government Orders

If the government really believes in the polluter pays principle, then taxpayers should not have to bear the risk related to these energy developments. I strongly believe that. Proper risk assessment and assignment of liability will force the industry to improve its safety practices. That alone will reduce the likelihood of catastrophic incidents.

My colleagues in the House have encouraged the government to study global best practices to ensure that it is putting Canadians first. It is important to look at several models to see what the Government of Canada can do. Many countries have much stricter nuclear liability regimes than Canada.

For example, in Germany, nuclear liability is absolute and unlimited, and financial guarantees go up to \$3.3 billion per power plant. In the United States, absolute liability is capped at \$12.6 billion U.S. Other countries around the world lean toward absolute and unlimited liability. I will not take the time to name them all.

The bill contains a \$1 billion liability in the event of a nuclear accident, which would cover only a fraction of the cost of the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. A billion dollars may seem like a lot to most Canadians, but the estimated cost of the accident in Fukushima Daiichi was more than \$250 billion. As you can see, when an accident of that magnitude occurs, \$1 billion does not go very far. If something like that were to happen here, Canadian taxpayers would have to make up the difference.

In closing, I want to mention that a number of stakeholders support our position. I will quote Greenpeace Canada because I think they are a rather significant stakeholder:

From the beginning of the use of nuclear power to produce electricity 60 years ago, the nuclear industry has been protected from paying the full costs of its failures. Governments have created a system that protects the profits of companies while those who suffer from nuclear disasters end up paying the costs.

● (1910)

I am very pleased to support Bill C-22, but I hope that the Conservatives will take certain things into account when this bill is in committee and that they will adopt some meaningful amendments to this bill.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech.

She spoke about the Fukushima plant, for one. It came as a surprise to some when we heard the terrible news about the disaster at the plant in 2011. The Conservatives are talking about how it is very unlikely, or practically impossible, that a nuclear disaster would happen in Canada.

However, members will recall that with Chernobyl, for example, the nuclear facilities were aging and poorly maintained. Experts were not particularly surprised. However, Japan, which has the third largest number of nuclear power reactors, was a reminder that even countries with the strictest, most effective safety measures can still potentially be susceptible to a disastrous accident. She mentioned some figures, and I think they were straightforward enough.

I would like to hear her comments on the Conservatives' attitude. They seem to think that this could never happen here because of the

controls in place in our nuclear industry, even though those controls are very limited in comparison to the ones in other countries.

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

I think that we need to consult Canadians in order to improve this bill. We also need to look at what other countries are doing. The regulations that the Conservatives are proposing in this bill are far less stringent than those in other countries. We need to take a leadership role, and we need to see if there are other examples we can follow.

I would also like to mention that this sector plays a very important role in Canada's economy. More than 30,000 jobs rely on Canada's nuclear sector. More than \$5 billion worth of electricity is produced by this sector each year. It is a major industry that is well established in Canada. However, we need to look at what experts in other countries are doing.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the deputy critic for energy and natural resources and a member of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, I was invited to a briefing on Bill C-22 organized by the minister and his officials.

When I asked them how they had arrived at the amount of liability, I expected them to tell me that they had prepared incident and accident scenarios to determine the amount. In the end, there was no real methodology. What they told me was that the amount was adequate. I was truly surprised.

It seems to me that the most logical way to determine the amount is to prepare different plausible scenarios for both nuclear and offshore accidents. They could then calculate the amount that would be more than sufficient to cover the costs of disasters that could occur. That is not at all how they went about it.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of the method used, or rather the lack of a specific method, to determine the total amount of corporate liability.

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has raised an interesting point. The \$1 billion liability is arbitrary and inadequate given what it could cost to clean up potential disasters. In fact, a number of stakeholders said that this amount was arbitrary.

This shows the importance of acting with transparency and consulting environmental NGOs and first nations in order to put together a bill that makes sense.

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●(1915)

[English]

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after a number of years, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak to this new Bill C-22, an act that would set the terms and conditions of liability not only for nuclear issues but also for oil and gas issues. It is a little misleading in the title, as it speaks to only the offshore. I will point out later on that the title is not exactly right.

First, at second reading, we deal with principles. This is when we talk about the principles of the bill. The principle I think we can all support is that liability for nuclear accidents and oil and gas spills should lie in a decent fashion with those who make those things happen. We can accept that the principle of the bill moving forward is okay. However, many of the details still remain, as they were six years ago, understated. Six years ago we talked about a \$650-million liability limit for nuclear plants. Now we are talking about \$1 billion.

What has happened in the intervening time? Well, we have seen what happened at Fukushima, and so we know quite clearly that nuclear liability is at a higher level than we ever dreamed or thought possible in a modern state, such as Japan, with the equipment we assumed would have been handled in a decent fashion. However, we found out that right from the very beginning, the opportunity for failure had been built into the system. Therefore, liability is important. It is important right from day one.

When people understand the nature of the liability, they are not going to shortchange during the construction of the facilities. They are not going to start out bean-counting how much they have to invest in a particular facility to avoid the type of unlimited liability that would apply to it. When we reduce liability, we probably end up with a lesser product to service our nuclear or offshore oil and gas industries. That, I think, is quite clear in the modern economics of today.

Most companies employ scores of accountants to examine the liability of their actions. When we set liability limits, they will determine the degree to which companies ensure that the safety of their projects is well maintained.

Is \$1 billion enough for the nuclear industry to ensure that a nuclear operator is going to put the best possible effort into creating a nuclear plant? Is it enough to ensure the best possible effort in running an existing plant? When there are conditions, such as at Fukushima, where the backup power supply could quite easily be flooded, is \$1 billion enough to ensure that someone does a careful safety analysis of the existing facilities?

Liability limits are extremely important, because they set the parameters for the industry. As we go along in this debate and see at committee the kinds of presentations about nuclear liability, the new presentations after Fukushima, I think it will become very clear to us that \$1 billion is probably not enough.

I am going to leave that subject and move over to the liability regimes for offshore oil and gas operations. Interestingly enough, we speak of offshore, but here in appendix 1, we talk about onshore in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. If one is onshore within 200 metres of inland water, under the current liability limits, there is no limit specified. Now it would be put at \$25 million.

●(1920)

What has happened recently in the Northwest Territories? Between Wrigley and Norman Wells, there was an oil spill from a buried pipeline that has easily cost that amount of money to clean up, and it still has not been dealt with completely. There are aging pipelines throughout this country, as well as in the Northwest Territories, and there are facilities that need attention.

What happens when we set a \$25 million liability limit on an oil pipeline that has existed for 30 or 40 years? How does it work out when one company sells it to another, in the nature of the oil and gas industry? Who is taking care of it? To what degree do they see the liability as being the most important part of what they are doing? To me, \$25 million on land in the Northwest Territories does not sound like a lot of money to take care of the kinds of spills that can occur from buried oil pipelines traversing the territory.

When it comes to blowouts in the High Arctic, there has actually been one. In the late 1970s in the Arctic Archipelago, there was a major blowout, but luckily it was natural gas. The flare from that natural gas blowout was visible by aviation. It was used as a navigation medium in the High Arctic because it was so large and went on for nine or ten months. We can imagine what would happen with that type of spill if that had been an oil discovery that had blown out. Within the limited number of wells that have been drilled in the Arctic, we have already had a blowout. That is the reality of it.

Now we are talking about a liability limit offshore of \$1 billion. With the spill in the Gulf of Mexico, tens of billions of dollars were involved in the cleanup. How do we quantify that in the Arctic? The National Energy Board did a study on it and determined that it does not really know how to deal with it, but it is going to just approve projects as they come up and it will see what companies are offering in terms of how to deal with blowout situations or other types of spills.

Interestingly enough, there is a clause in here. With proof of fault or negligence, there would be unlimited liability in most of these cases. What we have done is separate it out. It is \$1 billion if it is not a company's fault and it just happened to blow out. That is what it costs. If it was a company's fault, then it has to pay, pay, and pay.

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How does that work, when the National Energy Board approves a project when it knows it does not have any solution for a blowout? Where does the liability land then? How does that work in a situation in the Arctic? These are questions that need examination. This is why we should talk about these things in Parliament. That is why I am standing here today taking the time that I have, which is 10 minutes. Does that cover the full knowledge we have about these situations? Does that answer any questions? Not really. That is not much. No, we are going to need some serious time in committee to do anything with this particular bill, to understand the liability.

Interestingly enough, we are setting liability limits on land in the Northwest Territories. What did we go through in Parliament just a little while ago? There was a devolution agreement, whereby the Government of the Northwest Territories is now responsible for a lot of the stuff on the land. How is that going to work? Has the Government of the Northwest Territories given its okay to this liability limit on the land for which it now has responsibility? These are questions that we need answered. These are things that are obviously going to take a long time in committee. We have been through this before. Seven years ago we started this. Many bills have been brought forward in that time and the government has thrown up its hands on more than one occasion.

We look forward to seeing this in committee. We have agreed that the principle is right, but the details in the bill need a lot of work.

• (1925)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague for his excellent work. I actually have the honour of working with him on the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development. He always works very hard for his constituents and for Canada's north.

He rightly pointed out the importance of certain sustainable development principles. The Leader of the Opposition is one of the fathers of the Sustainable Development Act in Quebec. He wants to implement a national sustainable development act when he becomes prime minister.

It is very important to include the polluter pays principle in sustainable development legislation. Strangely enough, the Conservatives said they agreed with this principle. However, the bill does not quite reflect the polluter pays principle.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague whether he feels that the bill upholds the polluter pays principle. What amendments should be made to incorporate this principle?

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, in terms of polluter pays, I agree that those who go into operations that take risk have to be responsible for that risk. That is quite clear.

Polluting the environment in this day and age is one of the largest risks one can take. That, quite clearly, is what people think. There is a social licence about it. No one is interested in seeing oil spilled on the ground. They want it cleaned up. This is not the 1920s or the 1930s; it is 2014. That is quite clear.

When it comes to sustainable development, only by creating the parameters that ensure that companies do every possible thing to make their projects safe will we have sustainable development. Was it sustainable to lose that oil in the Gulf of Mexico? There was almost \$100 billion blown off there. Was that sustainable?

Was what happened in Fukushima sustainable? There was ruined landscape. The cleanup caused an enormous tax burden on the people of Japan. It probably caused damage to the Pacific Ocean, damage that will last for the rest of our lifetimes. How is that sustainable?

Liability limits set the parameters for how the project develops.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that the member across the way continued to refer to the need for the best possible effort being put into putting together a nuclear plan, when we know the NDP is opposed to any nuclear infrastructure in Canada. The NDP members have been asking for unlimited liability, yet they have no plan for how this would work.

We have put forward legislation that would balance the responsibility of nuclear operators to cover any damages while taking into account the impact on ratepayers.

My question is this. What would the NDP's proposal cost the ratepayers of Ontario, who rely on clean nuclear power for their electricity?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, I have dealt with the energy field for a long time on different issues. I was special adviser to the premier on energy in the Northwest Territories.

I think all energy should be priced according to what its full-value cost is. When we give nuclear energy this break, what we are doing is skewing the market. That is wrong. That is just what we are doing with the fossil fuel industry: we are giving it breaks over and over again through regulation and tax incentives that are really skewing the market.

The same thing would happen here with nuclear liability. If no one is facing up to the actual liability for putting up a plant, we are not doing a service to our children and grandchildren.

• (1930)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, looking at Bill C-22, we can see that there are many positive things in it that are steps in the right direction, but let us be frank and look at the record and what we are hearing from the government side.

We often hear that Canadians have to settle for less. Conservatives will tell us we are not being realistic about things, we have to settle for less, and Canadians in general have to settle for less because industry needs a bit of a break.

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It is not only the Conservative side that says that. The Liberal side has been saying that for years. I am proud to stand in the House and provide the only progressive vision for this country, seeing that neither party, either facing us or beside us, can give us a progressive vision.

For years and years, the Liberals neglected to promote safety for Canadians. As I said, this bill is a step in the right direction, but we do not feel it goes far enough; it needs to go further. We are hoping the government will listen and try to make things go further in terms of improving this legislation.

I am very upset that the Liberal Party has pulled all its speakers from this debate. I was hoping, since they say they are progressive, that they would match their talk with action, and unfortunately the fact that they have no speakers during this debate is very disappointing.

As I said, we are the only progressive option. We are the only party that is providing a progressive vision for Canadians. We know the other parties in the House are comfortable with the lobbies of big oil and big gas companies and the perverse effect this has on Canadian safety.

For example, I look at Line 9 in my riding of Vaudreuil—Soulanges and the fact that for 15 years, from 1998 until 2013, Enbridge was allowed to violate federal safety regulations, unfettered. The National Energy Board knew it was in violation. The federal government kept quiet, the Liberal governments under Chrétien and Martin and the government under the current Prime Minister. They kept quiet about this violation of safety regulations, putting in jeopardy the constituents in my riding with this pipeline that was not respecting regulations.

If we look at rail, it was a Liberal government that allowed rail companies to go down to one-man crews. We have seen the effect that a one-man crew had. When there are not enough eyes keeping something safe, if there is not enough manpower to have a second set of eyes to make sure everything is okay, accidents can happen. As soon as we rely on technological solutions only and reduce manpower when it comes to safety, it puts people in jeopardy.

The Conservatives have continued this negligence toward Canadians' safety, and I hope that they end up improving this legislation, that the reasoned arguments we are making will get through to the other side and they will improve this legislation.

My riding is on the Ottawa River. We are the only Quebec community that is south of the Ottawa River, all the other communities being in Ontario, and that body of water has things upriver like the Chalk River nuclear reactor. It has pipelines crossing it, so these are very real issues to my constituents. They worry and they talk to me about the effect a spill would have on the Ottawa River, the effect an accident would have there; it would ruin a whole ecosystem and ruin the natural beauty of our riding.

We have seen that consecutive provincial Liberal and Conservative governments in Ontario have neglected the upkeep of the Ottawa River, and the federal government has also neglected to keep the integrity of the river. The fact that this legislation does not go far enough continues to put it into jeopardy.

I know the Chalk River reactor because my dad was a truck driver. He used to deliver paper to different parts of the federal government in Ottawa, and his farthest route was in Chalk River. He delivered goods up to the reactor and the whole infrastructure around that reactor.

•(1935)

Therefore, I know it well, and I have to take issue with the member from Saskatchewan who said that New Democrats are not interested in the nuclear industry and continue to rail against it. I sat on the natural resources committee and heard witnesses. I asked the witnesses from the federal nuclear agency if there has been any research done by the federal government in generation 4 reactors, which is the future of the nuclear industry. If we want to talk about vision, we have to look generation 4 reactors. I asked if the federal government had done any research in this area and their answer to me was no, it had done zero research.

Therefore, in terms of having a vision for the nuclear industry, the Conservatives can talk a lot about it, but there is no action being taken. We have seen from the accidents that have happened that if we are to continue with this technology, it has to be vastly improved. The other thing is that the safety liability regime has to be improved. We have to move to an unlimited liability regime, and that is simply because it is going to tell the industry that accidents cannot be tolerated with this technology. We need to tell companies that we have seen the devastating effects of it and we are putting an unlimited liability regime on them so they will never have accidents. Otherwise, they will suffer enormous consequences if an accident ever happens. That is the whole idea behind the polluter pays principle. It is to make sure taxpayers are not footing the bill. A nuclear accident would not only be a horrible thing for taxpayers' pocketbooks but for their basic health.

The fact that there is not an unlimited liability regime in the nuclear industry is disturbing because it is an industry where we do not want accidents to happen. We need to send a message to the industry saying we do not ever want accidents to happen, so we need to put this regime in place.

When the nuclear industry talks about things like putting nuclear reactors in the north, it does not even account for things like frost heave, which is a major occurrence in the Arctic. It is disturbing that lobbyists and higher-ups in the nuclear industry do not understand the basic geographic reality of Canada's Arctic with something as simple as frost heave and talk about placing nuclear reactors there, with our changing climate. I and my party believe that there should be an unlimited liability regime in place for the nuclear industry and that we should be moving to a polluter pays model.

By assessing risk correctly, knowing all the factors that create risk, and assigning the proper liability to industry, the industry itself would improve its safety practices. If we put out the spectre of massive payouts in cases of an accident, industry will step up and improve its safety practices. It is thinking about its bottom line as well, and wants to protect its own companies and interests. When we cut corners for industry, it is going to cut corners as well. If we give it an inch, it will take a mile.

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I know that all of my constituents do not want to be footing the bill for accidents, such as offshore spills, in terms of nuclear liability. If we say that nuclear technologies are safe, oil extraction is safe, and transportation is safe—I have often heard that the transport of oil is 99.99999% safe—and if that is the case, then what is the problem with unlimited liability? If it is that safe, companies should not have to worry, and we can raise liability rates substantially.

We have been debating this for a long time. I have looked at the history of the nuclear liability regime in Canada. We were at a \$600 million cap, and then went to \$1 billion. The United States has a \$12 billion cap and Germany has an unlimited cap.

● (1940)

We have to look at best practices and move to a true polluter pays model. That means raising the liability limits for the oil industry and for the nuclear industry as well.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for laying out the concerns with regard to the legislation that is before the House.

One of the points that I think is worth making is with regard to the scope of damages that have happened in other incidents, such as Fukushima. In Fukushima, the Japanese government is estimating that the costs will be up to \$250 billion by the time all is said and done.

Could the member comment on the fact that although \$1 billion sounds like a tremendous amount of money, when we look at the scope and scale of other disasters out there, it is simply going to be insufficient, and Canadian taxpayers will be on the hook if a disaster like that should happen in Canada?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, it is true, \$1 billion does sound like a large amount of money.

However, the scale of these disasters, as we have seen with Fukushima and with Chernobyl in the 1980s, ruins entire regions of the earth. The costs entailed in that are incalculable. Although \$1 billion does seem like a lot, when we imagine the entire Ottawa region all of a sudden becoming ruined, we can then sort of understand the scale of the costs that are involved. There is the financial cost, but then there is that very real human cost. By putting an unlimited liability regime on this industry, we would be sending a message saying that we do not ever want to take on that human cost of lives being lost and entire regions of the earth being ruined.

It is not just a Canadian thing. It should be a global concern. When Fukushima happened, it was not as if Canadians did not care about what was happening in Japan. We felt as though part of the earth had been ruined, destroyed, and that very human, ecological cost should, in policy, translate into an unlimited regime.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the whole notion that liability should be unlimited comes back to the question of why it is being limited in the first place. It is being limited in the first place because the government believes that the industry could not sustain an accident, that it would be unprofitable. We are not worried about profit here. We are talking about human safety and the safety of the planet. We should not be worried about profit. We should be worried about whether or not our planet is going to survive.

If the industry is such that unlimited liability, which apparently is okay in some countries, is not okay in Canada because it will destroy an industry, then what are we doing with that industry? We only have to look so far as the Sydney tar ponds and the gold mine outside of Yellowknife to realize that the polluter pays principle has not really worked in Canada, because in both of those places, the companies left and Canada was left with the mess.

Are we not trying to change that here?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, it goes back to what I said at the beginning of debate.

What I have understood from the two other main parties in the House is that we have to settle for less, and we are constantly being accused of not being realistic. They have the interests of the profits of these companies in mind. The NDP is thinking of the very real human costs and the greater interests of the population of Canada, the human element of this, not the bottom line of an industry.

In the greater interests of future generations, we see that the human element is the more important one. When we pass away, we do not take our money with us, but we still have the world to leave to our children. That is the most important thing: that they are left a world that is clean, safe, and healthy.

Our progressive vision has that human element in mind. We sometimes put that human element above profit. Sometimes it is more important than profit. In this case, this is one of those times.

● (1945)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak on Bill C-22, an act respecting Canada's offshore oil and gas operations, enacting the Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act, repealing the Nuclear Liability Act and making consequential amendments to other acts.

New Democrats have indicated that they will support the bill at second reading, but they have grave concerns about the bill and are hoping to make amendments at committee.

I am going to focus on the oil and gas aspect of the proposed act.

Bill C-22 would update Canada's offshore liability regime for oil and gas exploration and operations to prevent incidents and ensure a swift response in the event of a spill. It would maintain unlimited operator liability for fault or negligence, increase the absolute liability no-fault from \$40 million in the Arctic and \$30 million in the Atlantic to \$1 billion for offshore oil and gas projects in both Arctic and Atlantic waters. It references the polluter pay principle.

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I am so interested in this issue because I live in Nanaimo—Cowichan, which is on Vancouver Island and is a coastline community. There are certainly efforts in British Columbia to look at offshore oil and gas exploration. However, one of the things that is important to remind people of is the cost when there is a spill.

The offshore BP Gulf oil spill of 2010 is expected to cost as much as \$42 billion for total cleanup, criminal penalties, and civil claims against it. The firm is reported to have already spent \$25 billion on cleanup and compensation. In addition, it faces hundreds of new lawsuits launched this spring along with penalties under the Clean Water Act that could reach \$17 billion. Members can see how \$1 billion for a spill of that magnitude simply would not cut it.

In British Columbia, there are a number of people and organizations that have raised concerns around the current regime in Canada. I want to reference a submission from the Union of B.C. Municipalities, UBCM, on June 21, 2013, which raises a number of issues.

First, they say that:

...BC local governments are very concerned with the increase in ocean traffic along the West Coast of BC and particularly from ships carrying dangerous and/or toxic products; and do not believe that the current environmental measures are adequate to clean up damages caused by these types of large scale spills or disasters.

It goes on in its presentation to say:

A key area of consensus was that a stringent environmental and fiscal regulatory system was necessary, and must be implemented, prior to offshore oil and gas development.

The report also contained a number of recommendations regarding oil spills, including:

Establish a substantial remediation fund from industry to be used in the event of an oil spill. (In light of the high costs for clean up of oil spills, the fund will have to be very robust.)

Invest in the necessary infrastructure to minimize risk of an oil spill and damage to surrounding areas in the event of an oil spill by:

Establishing deep sea salvage tugs along the central and north coast to assist vessels in distress.

Implementing a vessel tracking system for the British Columbia coast.

It goes on to talk about the oil spill response recovery and says that:

Development of an Incident Command System (ICS) and an oil spill organization that would be a repository for all equipment and contact information in the case of an oil spill.

Enhancement of current marine spill response capability on the British Columbia coast...

The report goes on to the polluter pay principle, saying:

BC local governments support the polluter pay principle, which makes polluters responsible for paying for damages caused by a spill.... The resolution also requests that a polluter pay fund or emergency fund be substantial, and that it be used to clean up, and compensate for any and all damages, including capital devaluation, social, cultural, and ecological damage, caused by an accident involving said goods and cargo; fund research into improving clean-up methods to deal with the eventuality of such spills....

In British Columbia right now we have a relatively pristine coast, and we are very concerned about preserving it, not only the environmental aspect, but the social and cultural aspect as well.

Much of B.C. has a healthy tourism industry, and it would be a disaster if that tourism industry, fisheries, and aquaculture were

damaged. Therefore, it is very important that whatever we do first of all ensures that the safety methods are put in place. However, if there is an unfortunate spill, there must be a way to compensate and to clean up.

• (1950)

I want to turn to a paper that was put out called “Protecting Taxpayers and the Environment Through the Reform of Canada’s Offshore Liability Regime”. It is a paper by William Amos and Ian Miron. The abstract at the beginning of the paper states:

This article assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the various legislative components that combine to form the overarching “patchwork” civil liability regime for oil and gas activities in the Canadian offshore. It concludes that the existing liability regime fails to adequately implement the polluter-pays principle and provides a wholly inadequate measure of protection to Canadians and the Crown against offshore-related environmental liabilities. At the same time, the existing regime fails to promote an appropriate industry safety culture, creating a moral hazard that increases the risk of a worst-case scenario oil pollution incident.

That is an important piece. We know that when industry understands what its responsibilities and the regulations are, it will meet them, but we have to be clear what those are.

The paper does a very detailed analysis and, unfortunately, I do not have time to go through the whole paper, but they do have some recommendations. Amos and Miron state:

Canada’s current offshore liability regime suffers from a number of weaknesses that actually increase the risks of a worst-case scenario oil pollution incident by failing to promote an appropriate industry safety culture, while exposing Canadian taxpayers to potentially massive liabilities in the event of a serious spill. These weaknesses include: inappropriately low maximum absolute liability limits; uncertain availability of environmental damages, and no mechanism for assessing the costs of long-term ecological system damage; an absence of express recognition of the polluter-pays principle; lack of a dedicated, industry-capitalized fund or mutual insurance pool to ensure remediation and compensation even when the operator is unwilling or unable to finance these efforts; lack of clarity regarding the breadth of operator liability for oil spill response costs; a restriction on the imposition of joint and several liability under the residual strict liability regime; lack of clarity regarding the overlap between the COGOA and the AWPPA liability regime...

They go on to make a couple of other points. They identify the weaknesses and make a couple of recommendations as follows:

In order to effectively reduce the risks borne by taxpayers in the event of an offshore oil pollution incident to an appropriate level, liability reforms must:

1) a. Remove the limit on operators’ maximum absolute liability; b. In the alternative, significantly increase maximum absolute liability limits and create an exception to the cap where operators contravene federal law;

2) Increase financial responsibility requirements to screen out fiscally unqualified operators, although not necessarily to the level of the absolute liability cap.

It is a very thorough analysis of the weaknesses of the current legislated process and it makes some very strong recommendations for where it should go. The legislation before us fails to meet some of those criteria.

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The paper also touches on the polluter pays principle, and I want to mention that because that is a very important theme that seems to run throughout a number of organizations that have offered a critique around the bill. It states:

Explicit recognition of the polluter-pays principle, particularly when coupled with substantial increases to or the outright elimination of statutory maximum absolute liability limits, sends a clear signal to industry that it will be held liable for the costs of pollution. Without this signal, industry may have more incentive for risky behaviour, knowing that the taxpayer will ultimately subsidize the consequences of such behaviour. The certainty provided by an explicit statutory recognition of the polluter-pays principle removes this incentive and instead promotes industry behaviour that seeks to “protect ecosystems in the course of ... economic activities.”

I want to quickly refer to the fall 2010 report of the Commissioner of the Environmental and Sustainable Development. In that report it was clearly demonstrated that on the west coast, the Coast Guard did not have an adequate plan in place to deal with oil spills if such an accident should happen. Therefore, not only do we not have adequate protections in place from an industry perspective with regard to liability limit, but we also do not have a mechanism on the ground to deal with it in the event that there is such an accident.

I again want to remind people about the importance of protecting our environment. It is about fisheries, tourism, recreation and all those elements that are such an important part of our very precious and fragile coastlines.

I encourage all members in the House to look at meaningful amendments to the legislation.

• (1955)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to emphasize that within the legislation there are a number of aspects that would improve our current situation. I made reference to the polluter pays principle, which is fairly consistent with the notion of liability. Citizens across Canada would support something of that nature.

The bill emphasizes the importance of drilling for the development and production of oil and gas in the Atlantic regions. It would harmonize the environmental assessment process for projects. There are a number of very strong, positive initiatives within the legislation. As such, in principle, we would like to see the legislation go forward. It is important to note that the legislation has been needed for a number of years. This is now the fourth or fifth rendition. We hope to see the bill pass, but most importantly, we would also like to see amendments brought forward to try to improve upon the legislation.

Would the member comment on the position of the New Democratic Party on the legislation and to what degree it wants to see amendments? If it does not see the amendments, would it support the legislation?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out in my opening statement, the New Democrats support this bill at second reading and getting it to committee.

I outlined in my speech some of the concerns around the amount of liability. Although I am aware that the polluter pays principle is in the bill, I want to emphasize how important that principle is. I also want to emphasize that others, like the Union of B.C. Municipalities and other legal experts, have talked about how important it is to enshrine that principle.

With regard to whether the New Democrats will support the bill with amendments, I cannot say. I do not have a crystal ball. I do not know what those amendments would be. I do not know what the Conservative government would entertain as amendments. Certainly, its past track record regarding amendments has been pretty poor. I would like to be cautiously optimistic that the government would be open to amendments, but that has not been its track record. We will have to wait and see.

I hope that when the bill is referred to committee, there will be adequate time to study the bill, bring in witnesses who can speak to the substance of the it, and then look at the amendments that could be proposed based on the testimony before committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I would like to immediately follow up on the question from my colleague from Winnipeg North. I must admit that it boggles my mind that he was talking about a number of years, because what this bill will fix in part—it will not fully fix it—is the result of decades of negligence on the part of successive Liberal and Conservative governments. Nearly four decades of inaction on nuclear safety and compensation is what will be partly fixed here.

I would like my colleague to tell us how successive governments have failed to keep up with the how the industry assesses risk. Take for example how the German bank WestLB determined that it was nearly impossible to manage the risks of developing oil in the Arctic.

Could my colleague talk about how inaction on the part of successive governments caused Canada to lose a great deal of its competitiveness in terms of developing its natural resources.

• (2000)

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I would like to touch on the lengthy time that bills have been before the House. In fact, the last bill, Bill C-15, received first reading in 2010 and then sat for a year on the order paper without ever being brought forward.

I always find it ironic that when the New Democrats want to get up and debate the substance of a bill that could have profound implications for taxpayers because of this \$1 billion in it instead of the real liability, we are somehow accused of dragging our feet. It is really the government that has been dragging its feet, and governments before it.

It is important. I keep talking about due diligence. It is our due diligence to study bills that are before the House and ensure that we have the best possible bill. That is our role as parliamentarians.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak in support of Bill C-22, the energy safety and security act.

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My colleagues on our side of the House have done an excellent job explaining this legislation, so I would like to explain the role of the federal government in overseeing Canada's nuclear sector.

As has been made clear today, Canada has an excellent record of safety for both the offshore oil and gas and the nuclear sectors. The government places top priority on health, safety, security and the environment in relation to nuclear activities in Canada. It has established a comprehensive legislation framework, which focuses on protecting health, safety, security and the environment. It consists of the following: the Nuclear Safety and Control Act, the Nuclear Energy Act, the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act and the Nuclear Liability Act. Our government supports the generation of nuclear power because it is an important component of a diversified energy mix, and contributes to the fact that 77% of Canada's electricity comes from non-emitting sources.

When properly managed, nuclear energy can contribute effectively and significantly to sustainable development objectives. For that reason, the Canadian nuclear industry is a very important component of Canada's economy and energy mix.

According to a study by Canadian manufacturers and exporters, the industry directly employs 30,000 Canadians and, through its suppliers, generates another 30,000 jobs. The industry generates nearly \$7 billion in economic activity, pays \$1.5 billion in federal and provincial taxes, and exports \$1.2 billion in goods and services.

Through our responsible resource development plan, our government provides support to a strong and safe nuclear sector. For example, our government has taken strong action by ensuring a strong regulator; updating our legislative framework; responsibly managing legacy waste; restructuring Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, AECL; and building international relationships.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, CNSC, is Canada's strong, independent nuclear regulator. The mission of the CNSC is to regulate the use of nuclear energy and materials to protect health, safety, security and the environment, and to respect Canada's international commitments on the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The Nuclear Safety and Control Act, which established the CNSC in May 2000, provides a modern regulatory framework that mirrors the latest scientific knowledge in the areas of health, safety, security and environmental protection.

In addition to the policy and other responsibilities of Natural Resources Canada, the following departments contribute to a whole-of-government approach to promoting a safe and secure nuclear sector both here at home and abroad.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade promotes bilateral and multilateral nuclear co-operation and safety, as well as the implementation of non-proliferation and disarmament agreements. Through this action, our government enhances security and well-being by promoting the peaceful and safe use of chemical and nuclear technologies, and ensures the compliance with the international commitments such as the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention. It also assists in the development of relevant international law and guidance, such as conventions established under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Nuclear Suppliers Group regime.

Health Canada is responsible for protecting Canadians from the risk of radiation exposure. It is responsible for the federal nuclear emergency plan and supports the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. Health Canada's activities are managed by the Radiation Protection Bureau. It contributes to maintaining and improving the health of Canadians by investigating and managing the risks from natural and artificial sources of radiation.

• (2005)

Additionally, Transport Canada promotes public safety during the transportation of dangerous goods. The Transportation of Dangerous Goods Directorate is the leading source of regulation, information, and advice on dangerous goods transport for the public, industry, and government employees.

Industry Canada fosters the growth of Canadian businesses in making Canada more competitive internationally. The growth of the Canadian nuclear energy industry is the responsibility of the manufacturing and processing technologies branch, which focuses on competitiveness, international trade, technology, and investment.

All of this is to say that Canada has a very strong nuclear industry with independent regulatory oversight and strict safety standards. We are proud of this record, but we recognize that we must do more for Canada to be in line with international standards. That is why we have put forward Bill C-22, which takes significant steps to increase the absolute liability of the nuclear industry.

This legislation will also broaden the number of categories for which compensation may be sought and improve the procedures for delivering compensation. Furthermore, the bill permits Canada to implement the international convention on supplementary compensation for nuclear damage, or the CSC.

Canadian ratification of the CSC would create a treaty relation with the United States addressing liability and compensation for damages arising from trans-boundary and transportation nuclear incidents. By joining this convention, Canada would benefit from significant added pooled funding for compensation, up to another \$130 million to \$500 million.

While our government's support of a strong and safe nuclear industry is clear and well documented, the NDP members oppose everything to do with this sector. They oppose the hard-working Canadians who rely on non-emitting nuclear energy for their livelihood and they reject our attempts to raise the absolute liabilities on it to a level that is up to date.

While the NDP would prefer that the nuclear industry remains subjected to liability limits that are over 30 years out of date, we will continue to work toward increasing this important aspect of our safety system.

The leader of the NDP reaffirmed his party's position when he said, "I want to be very clear. The NDP is opposed to any new nuclear infrastructure in Canada".

Government Orders

That is certainly not our government's position, and we are very proud of it. We will continue to work toward a stronger, safer, and more secure nuclear industry for the benefit of all Canadians, and I look for the support of both sides of the House tonight in achieving that end.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague give me his opinion on the total amounts of liability?

Does he think it makes sense for the committee to look at a potential amendment to include an indexing formula for the amounts, so that they are indexed annually to the inflation rate? Does the member think we could avoid having to review this issue if we set the appropriate amount to cover expenses and it is indexed over the years to adjust to the cost of living and the cost of workplace accidents?

● (2010)

[*English*]

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, throughout the day today we have had a tremendous amount of debate on this issue. The bill updates outdated liability limits. For instance, 1976 was the last time an update on the bill was presented. At that point in time, it was some \$75 million of liability coverage, which has now been expanded to \$1 billion.

I thank my hon. colleague for the question and I appreciate that the opposition members have indicated they will support the bill going to committee. That is a good first step and I applaud them for it, but the important aspect of this bill is the \$1 billion. We have heard a lot of discourse over the course of the day about whether that is enough or not. The amount has to be sustainable, and by setting it at \$1 billion, I believe our government has achieved that goal in a responsible way.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member would comment further on an issue that many Canadians are concerned about, and that is our environment. We have environmental assessment processes that governments and companies looking to invest all have to abide by. Could the member provide some commentary as to how the legislation would obligate Ottawa, provinces, and other stakeholders to take a more coordinated approach to environmental assessments?

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that throughout the course of the day we have talked about regulatory oversight. Clearly there is a well-established relationship between the federal government and the provinces and all the various agencies and ministries that I outlined in my presentation. I would be happy to read that for him again if he wishes.

The bottom line is that the government would establish a level of oversight and regulation through this bill that would represent good business and good governance in ensuring that we operate a safe and responsible nuclear industry.

Clearly, our history is good. It is strong. We have not had any major accidents, and that is a good thing. However, the reality is that we all have to be conscious of our environment. Some of my colleagues spoke earlier about families and next generations. I am as

concerned about that as they are. I believe that the regulation, the oversight, and the governance provided in this bill clearly meet that demand.

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech, particularly since it included a lot of the international component of nuclear regimes.

There are many different ways of regulating this particular industry. I know from some of the reading that I have done that 75% of France's power, I believe, comes from nuclear power. It has a variety of newer types of nuclear power generators that allow it to have energy security while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We have heard a lot of questions tonight about the \$1 billion operator liability limit that is in the legislation as it stands. Could my colleague provide some context by giving us a better understanding of what the standards are internationally? Could he enlighten the House on that subject?

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question, because it brings into context a more global approach to who is doing the right thing.

A \$1 billion operator liability compares well with other countries. In the United Kingdom, operator liability is currently capped at approximately \$260 million, barely a quarter of what we are proposing. In South Africa, operator liability is \$240 million. In Spain, it is \$227 million. France is even lower, at \$140 million. We would suggest those are irresponsible levels. We have taken a very responsible approach.

● (2015)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to begin my speech, although I feel like responding to the member for Don Valley West by saying that we cannot compare different systems. He cited the example of European countries that have completely different levels of financial liability.

They are indeed systems that are implemented differently. As the parliamentary secretary said, compared to Canada, those countries have nuclear energy generation levels that are completely different in percentage terms. Consequently, these are not valid arguments because we are comparing apples to oranges. I will come back to that.

Bill C-22 is definitely headed in the right direction, but it does not solve all the problems. In particular, it provides for only \$1 billion of financial liability for private nuclear power generation companies, whereas the costs incurred as a result of nuclear disasters far exceed that amount.

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Why is this subject of particular interest to me? It is because I was living in western Europe at the time of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986. My colleague from Saint-Lambert was living there too, and she also experienced the famous radioactive cloud. The authorities explained to us that it did not cross borders because it obviously did not have a passport. In reality, however, the radiation affected not only Ukraine at the time, but also much, if not all, of western Europe.

When the civilian facilities were built to generate power, no one ever anticipated a disaster of that magnitude. There can be no comparison with military nuclear consequences, but those consequences were disastrous and unpredictable.

Furthermore, the populations in the immediate exclusion zone were not the only ones that suffered stress at that time. People died from radiation, but those who were within a slightly wider circle also developed diseases. In particular, there were birth defects, which were a real problem in Ukraine in the 1990s. Several thousand children, if not tens of thousands, were born with deformities or defects. That was an extremely traumatic experience in Europe.

We obviously will not ignore the nuclear disaster that occurred in Fukushima in 2011. We must therefore consider the level of technology when talking about these nuclear safety problems. In 1986, according to the experts, while it was predictable, although not understandable, that a natural disaster might occur in facilities that did not have adequate safety levels, there was no level of deterioration in Japan, the third-largest civilian nuclear power in the world, that could have suggested a disaster of that magnitude.

I heard the argument made by the member for Don Valley West, and I congratulate him for taking the trouble to speak to us, unlike his Conservative colleagues, who seem to have left this place.

● (2020)

That argument, which can be summed up by the words “strong and safe nuclear energy industry”, to quote the member, does not hold water, and this is why there is insurance. The reason behind insurance is that unforeseen or unlikely events happen. However, they happen because a series of human errors will have consequences that are totally unthinkable and that have a financial impact that goes far beyond what might have been imagined.

Of course, the amount of \$1 billion will be discussed. Its arbitrariness is quite astonishing, because we know that in the case of Fukushima, the estimates are in the order of several hundred billion dollars. With regard to the Chernobyl disaster, I was reading on the site of France’s Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission that it was impossible to put an exact figure on the scope of the disaster because it spanned a decade. For some disasters, it is even impossible to quantify their full financial impact. This is my answer to the Conservatives’ main argument.

I was interested to note another argument the Conservatives used in previous debates. That argument was that we should be able to compare ourselves with different countries in millions of dollars. The example they gave us was that of European countries, where the level of financial liability for France, for instance, is \$140 million.

In reality, this is a perfectly fallacious argument, because the level of liability must increase in value according to how nuclear energy

production is organized in a given country. The example of France, which I know personally, is that of a country where 75% of current electricity production comes from nuclear plants. Furthermore, in the 1990s, this percentage rose to 85% or 89%. At one point, the country’s energy policy was based almost solely on its nuclear capability.

The way in which things are organized was that the state was the major shareholder, through the French Atomic Energy Commission, which was the owner of a private company that was called Framatome at that point and became Areva in the early 2000s. However, the level of government involvement is still in excess of 70%.

Imagine if a disaster happened involving Areva, the private company. The government, with a 70% stake in this private company, would take full responsibility for the consequences, not only with regard to cleanup, but also with regard to compensation for the victims.

We can see that the context is completely different because in this case we do not even have to wonder whether it is fair or unfair that the taxpayer should take part in insuring an industrial risk, since the industrial risk is not really a private industrial risk. In fact, a specific country decided at one point to be the owner of the primary source of electrical energy.

This discussion of the comparison between \$140 million and \$1 billion is completely distorted. I totally reject this argument. This argument is fallacious and intended solely to make comparisons and give Canadians the impression that they would be protected in the event of a nuclear accident, while in reality when the company involved is a private company that is completely independent from the government, the government says clearly that it is not involved in the production of energy and that it would therefore not have to suffer the consequences or compensate the victims if a problem arose.

I see that I am running out of time. I will stop here and take questions from my colleagues.

● (2025)

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague on his speech. He recalled a very dramatic and tragic event that occurred in Europe and affected all the neighbouring countries. It was a famous cloud that unfortunately had devastating effects on the health of many people.

The consequences cannot be quantified, and they have a horrible effect on people’s lives and health. My colleague spoke about pregnancies and birth defects, not to mention all the blood cancers caused by nuclear radiation.

My colleague also mentioned the \$1 billion limit, an artificial limit. As he explained, costs have mushroomed, and an artificial limit of \$1 billion is not going to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order.

The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Mr. Speaker, I understand quite well the gist of my colleague’s question.

Government Orders

Having lived through this terrible experience, even though I was not near the actual site of the accident, I know how emotional this is for my colleague.

What we are dealing with, in my view, is the concept of privatization of benefits and nationalization of risks. When a government is prepared to assume or nationalize risks, then it also nationalizes benefits. We cannot have both, that is, on the one hand, nationalization of risks and, on the other hand, benefits for private corporations that do not pay to assume risks.

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member opposite. He talked about how the absolute liability level of \$1 billion is not enough. He talked about the industry in France, where the absolute liability limit is about \$120 million. He thinks it should be raised there. Well, we are talking about Canada.

Clearly, what the member wants to do is close down the nuclear industry in Canada. It is a green industry. The NDP talked about how it supports green industries, so I would like to ask the member if he agrees with his leader, who said:

I want to be clear. The NDP is opposed to any new nuclear infrastructure in Canada.

The member for Winnipeg Centre said:

Somewhere out there Homer Simpson is running a nuclear power plant... We do not want to see the Darlington nuclear power plant doubled in size. We want to see it shut down.

These members are clearly against the nuclear industry, yet they claim to be in favour of green energy. I would just like to ask the member if what his party wants to do is shut down nuclear energy entirely and the tens of thousands of jobs that go with it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmī: Mr. Speaker, I do not recall saying that I wanted to see an end to everything nuclear. I will reread my notes and the *House of Commons Debates*. I do not believe I said that.

Nor can we say that the nuclear industry is green because that is not the direction we want to take. A number of countries have decided to phase out their nuclear industry. Germany is one such country. Its goal is to shut down all of its nuclear power plants by 2021. In the meantime, its nuclear plants are still operational.

I do not believe that the NDP holds a Manichaeian view that everything should either remain operational or be shut down. All we are doing is discussing a particular issue, namely the level of financial liability of a private industrial activity in Canada. I was merely saying that no comparison can be made with the economic and legislative reality of other jurisdictions where electricity generation is fully nationalized.

● (2030)

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start with a preliminary comment. I find it incredible that our country's federal government has taken so long to address risk management, internalize costs and protect the public interest.

In his speech about nuclear energy, the hon. member for Don Valley West said that safety is a top priority. However, it is all

relative, given that liability is limited to \$1 billion. As he said, Canada's nuclear industry is mostly privatized. The Conservative vision, which the Liberals support, is clearly behind the times when it comes to the future of Canada's nuclear industry. The Conservatives' shoelaces are untied and they are about to trip over them without realizing that they are going to crash to the ground.

The government is seriously going to have to take the time to listen to what the NDP is saying, in order to understand the real issues in the debate we are engaged in right now. Obviously, I would point out another paradox that borders on the ridiculous and in fact is so ridiculous, it enters the realm of caricature. Today, the government imposed a time allocation motion on a bill that has been sitting on the shelf and was even torpedoed by the Prime Minister when he failed to abide by the fixed election date law in 2008. The bill sat on the shelf for years, and catching up got put on hold for decades before the government corrected one obvious flaw, only in part and relatively clumsily.

There is nothing to prevent me, like all of my New Democrat colleagues, from supporting the bill at second reading. We will at least have a base to work on, somewhat wobbly though it may be. In cabinetmaking, when a table is wobbly, you can always try to level it, particularly if you have some expertise and a degree of skill. You have to make sure it is solid and the dishes will not fall off.

In the second part of my speech, I am going to focus on the nuclear industry. The nuclear industry needs to assume its responsibility completely. I do not think that comment will generate debate. To start with, it is a matter of the public interest. I would hope that everyone will agree that the safety of the Canadian public as a whole is absolutely non-negotiable, in spite of a few somewhat nonsensical comments from government members.

We also need to learn from the various events that have taken place in the past in various parts of the world. Based on that, we have to draw the following conclusion: in the Canadian context, setting the limit at \$1 billion will be insufficient to cover the cost without requiring that the government invest large amounts of taxpayers' money to deal with certain potential accidents. Zero risk does not exist anywhere. If I take my car out tomorrow, I assume a share of the risk, for which I pay through my insurance. However, the risk must be completely assumed by the industry. That is a very basic question of how a market operates. We are talking about internalizing the costs associated with the risk to be assumed. It is a very simple principle. Plainly, understanding how a market functions in economics is an insurmountable obstacle for many government members.

● (2035)

There is also the issue of the competitiveness of the Canadian nuclear industry. It must be viable and exportable, and our Canadian businesses must be able to compete and offer their skills and expertise by having optimal conditions on our domestic market, no matter the area of activity, whether it involves the design, construction, operation or development of certain parts of the systems in the nuclear industry.

Government Orders

We are not the only ones talking about this. This is a concern shared by experts in different fields about both the nuclear and the oil and gas industries. I will first quote Joel Wood, senior research economist at the Fraser Institute, who had this to say about the absolute liability cap:

Increasing the cap only decreases the subsidy; it does not eliminate it.

The subsidy is obviously a concept that I hope my Conservative colleagues will be able to grasp. I hope that they will be able to follow my logic. However, I am not very confident that they will since the Conservatives manage to confuse collective savings with the Canada pension plan and a tax, for example, which shows that the government has a very limited understanding of very important social issues.

Mr. Wood goes on to say:

The Government of Canada should proceed with legislation that removes the liability cap entirely rather than legislation that maintains it, or increases it to be harmonious with other jurisdictions.

When speaking of other jurisdictions, as the member for Saint-Jean said, we are speaking about foreign examples that are comparable in terms of the development of the nuclear or oil and gas industry.

Let us take a look at oil and gas development. One of the first elements is rather strange. In fact the bill deals strictly with offshore development, and does not deal with the entire issue of oil and gas development and transportation. We are already wondering why the government took a slapdash approach.

Earlier, I attended a meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance, where I was filling in for my very esteemed colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for the clause by clause study of the bill.

During the period for questions and comments on omnibus Bill C-31, which I would remind the House is a monstrous bill that is impossible to study in the context of our work in the House or on committee, I raised some very serious concerns that the riding of Beauport—Limoilou has about the transportation of dangerous goods by rail. Bill C-31 was compromising, possibly even severely compromising, the regulations in that area.

Unfortunately, in Bill C-22, we are going to, yet again, end up partially correcting past failings and massive negligence by the Liberals and Conservatives. There is a reason we see them working so hard on joining forces to try to stop us. We saw that earlier this week with the conditions put on the debates scheduled to take place between now and the end of June.

We cannot look at this type of activity separately or in isolation, using a piecemeal approach, without understanding all this might entail for our society, our citizens, the environment and even for industry. It is truly deplorable to see the government improvising so easily and providing hollow, ready-made answers that do nothing to address the legitimate concerns that Canadians might have.

• (2040)

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know

exactly what the NDP's position is on offshore gas development. I am sure the people of Newfoundland would like to know as well.

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I will not hide the fact that the NDP has a perfectly coherent position, regardless of the objections he has to questions about offshore oil development or rail or pipeline transportation.

What the NDP objects to is the government's complacency and the lack of regulatory mechanisms and inspectors. I am not even talking about the processes involved in bringing a project to completion. Basically, the NDP objects to the overall weak regulatory framework and to the fact that industry is allowed free rein.

Self-regulation is tantamount to living in a fantasy world and refusing to face reality. We must not be naive. We must be demanding and demanding is what the NDP will always be.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member could provide comment in regard to the liability issue. He talked about the \$1 billion not being enough, and I can appreciate why he said that.

The question I have is about our universities. There are universities in Canada that do research, and in certain situations they work in nuclear research activities. To what degree does my colleague believe that those universities should be obligated to get insurance policies?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Winnipeg North for that question.

The reason why I reacted badly to the comment by my colleague from Don Valley West is that I once worked as a physicist. Absolute safety is pretty much incompatible with the overall Canadian framework of a \$1-billion liability ceiling.

However, my colleague from Winnipeg North talked about something else. He compared a heavy industry, the nuclear industry and the electricity generating industry, with a much less powerful research reactor. Liability is also clearly different.

That is why I support this bill at second reading. It is important for us to distinguish properly between activity sectors that are quite different and from that point on, to establish liability scales adapted to each individual sector. For that reason, debate on this bill should certainly not be limited.

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since we are talking about liability, I will point out that a railway accident recently occurred in Quebec. Oil was spilled, and it is amazing to see that no one is being held liable for it.

That is amazing. The moment someone arrives with a bill, no one is there to accept it, and it becomes an embarrassing problem. One of the major weaknesses of this bill is that you have to phone a lawyer before you call anyone to clean up, repair and provide compensation. Something is wrong. People are in trouble because someone did not do their job right, and they have to go looking for a lawyer.

Government Orders

I would like my colleague to tell us about that disconnect, about the fact that we in Canada always have to phone a lawyer before calling someone to clean up.

• (2045)

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his particularly relevant comment.

He has shed light on the fact that when we correct deficiencies in the legal framework, in the legal approach or in the compensation framework, it is often already too late. That is really unfortunate. I entirely agree with my colleague on that point.

The problem is much greater and much more fundamental than the solutions that Bill C-22 will provide. That is why we must clearly go further and, more particularly, expand the measures that should be introduced.

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in support of Bill C-22, the proposed energy safety and security act, which would provide a world-class regulatory regime for Canada's offshore and nuclear industries while strengthening protection for Canadians and the environment. Bill C-22 would ensure accountability from these industries and protection for taxpayers if an incident or spill results in cleanup costs and compensation.

The Governments of Canada, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador have worked together over several years to update Canada's offshore safety regime. Bill C-22 reflects this extensive collaboration by focusing on three main areas: prevention, response, and accountability.

Allow me to summarize a few of the key points in each of these areas.

First, with regard to prevention, the bill would raise financial capacity requirements for offshore operators to a minimum of \$1 billion. It also would provide authority for offshore boards to impose fines for regulatory contraventions. In the nuclear sector, Bill C-22 would increase absolute liability for compensation for civil damages from \$75 million to \$1 billion.

In the area of response, Bill C-22 would implement a number of measures to improve spill prevention and response capability. The bill would provide industry with the option of establishing a pooled fund of at least \$250 million, and it would permit the safe use of spill treating agents where there is a net environmental benefit.

As far as accountability is concerned, our government is delivering on its promise to enshrine the polluter pays principle in law. Further, we are also clarifying jurisdictional responsibilities for occupational health and safety in the offshore.

These are not stand-alone legislative improvements. Rather, they are part of a comprehensive and ongoing approach to achieve environmental protection in resource development throughout Canada. Our government has been clear. Projects would only be approved if they were safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

That is why our government has introduced a series of new laws and regulations through our plan for responsible resource development to strengthen environmental protection. For example, we have worked to ensure that the National Energy Board has the necessary resources to increase pipeline monitoring and inspections, so that companies are held accountable. These measures include increasing the number of full audits of federally regulated pipelines, and we have put forward new, significant fines as a strong deterrent against breaking Canada's rigorous environmental regulations.

Our government's record on ensuring that Canada has a world-class safety regime is proven with each of these measures. Yet the opposition voted against each of these improvements.

Offshore, we have taken major steps to enhance the protection of Canada's marine environment. Our government has increased tanker inspections, required the use of double-hulled ships, and improved the navigation tools and ship surveillance used in our coastal waterways.

In addition, a tanker safety expert panel has reviewed Canada's current system and is proposing further measures to strengthen it. After many consultations with stakeholders and aboriginal peoples on the panel's report, last month the Minister of Transport announced our government's next steps in strengthening Canada's world-class tanker safety system.

Many of these new safety and environmental measures are currently being enshrined in law. For example, Bill C-3, the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act, would strengthen oil spill response, set new requirements for energy facilities, establish new standards for pollution prevention, and introduce substantial monetary penalties to deal with offences. While our current marine safety regime has served Canada well, these new initiatives would help make Canada's shipping standards truly world class. We are working hard to develop support and enforce these standards.

On our east coast, the Government of Canada shares offshore management with two provinces, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Offshore oil and gas projects are accordingly regulated by the appropriate offshore board, either the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board or the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board.

• (2050)

Each offshore board ensures that operators exercise due diligence to prevent spills from occurring in Canada's offshore. With this in mind, we work closely with these two provinces to update and expand legislation to ensure that Canada's offshore rules are among the strongest in the world.

Government Orders

The accord act gives the offshore boards the legal authority to regulate oil and gas activities. The boards evaluate each drilling application for completeness and compliance with federal regulations. As a result, drilling cannot occur unless the responsible board is fully satisfied that drilling plans are safe for workers and for the environment.

Providing a liability and compensation regime to protect Canadians and create stability for this important industry falls under federal jurisdiction. The Government of Canada has a duty to all Canadians to assume its responsibilities in this area, and we are committed to doing so. Bill C-22 would increase the amount of financial capacity companies operating in the offshore must have to meet all liability obligations and it would increase the amount of the deposit companies must provide prior to receiving an authorization for drilling or production. In other words, before any offshore drilling or production activity could take place, companies would have to prove that they could cover the costs that could result in the unlikely event of an incident.

Canada has long depended on the shipping industry to move products from our coastal ports to world markets. On any given day, about 180 vessels operate in Canada's coastal waters. Energy is a big part of this trade. Each year, 80 million tonnes of oil is shipped safely off Canada's coast. On Canada's west coast, tankers have been moving oil safely since the 1930s.

With the phenomenal growth of the oil and gas industry in B.C. and Alberta, marine shipping on Canada's coast will increase substantially in the coming years. We are preparing for this future growth through our efforts today to bolster Canada's safety regime for the maritime environment. Our government is ensuring that the many opportunities for economic growth and prosperity that Canada's natural resources offer are available to all Canadians throughout the country, including aboriginal peoples. Our government's plan for responsible resource development will help achieve this by creating greater certainty and predictability for project investors while at the same time strengthening environmental protections, as Bill C-22 demonstrates.

In conclusion, these are just some of the ways in which our government is taking action to ensure that Canada continues to have world-class environmental protection in resource development. As all members can appreciate, Bill C-22 would provide a solid regulatory framework to safely govern the offshore and nuclear industries in Canada for decades to come. Bill C-22 would ensure that Canada's vast resource wealth can be developed responsibly by putting public safety and environmental protection first.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his discourse on this bill, but I think he has missed something. He talked about the offshore regime, but when we examine the bill, we find that almost a third of Canada is covered onshore by a liability regime. In the Northwest Territories, the maximum liability without proof of fault or negligence is \$25 million onshore. Therefore, it seems that perhaps he needs to spend a little more time to understand this bill. We should be spending more time in Parliament talking about it, because obviously there are things in it that he has not seen yet.

● (2055)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, having listened to some of the debate earlier, I recognize the fact that this will be going to committee and there will be more discussion. We can take a look at the absolute liabilities we have. We have talked about the Atlantic offshore and the \$30 million there for absolute liability and the \$40 million in the Arctic, where the member comes from. It is clearly unacceptable that this is the rate it is. With Bill C-22, we would raise that so that it would cover the kinds of concerns people have.

There are a couple of points I would like to mention to the member.

With regard to Canada's responsibilities and the way it handles regulations, I remember that about six or seven years ago, when I was just getting started in politics, I had a chance to talk to some individuals. These people had been around the world, and they said that the best place for regulations and protection of the environment is Canada. The only place that came close was Australia, and that was because it was taking the regulations Canadians had.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's comments regarding the issue of liability. He stated that the government would be open to amendments. A member from across the way heckled, saying, "always open for amendments", but that is not what we have witnessed from the government over the years.

We in the Liberal Party have indicated that the principle of the legislation is good, and we are encouraged by it, but we believe that it needs to be strengthened. There are certain amendments we believe would provide more strength and would improve the legislation.

I wonder if the member could provide further comment on the degree to which he believes the government is actually open to listening to what opposition members might have to say in regard to amendments.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, we have gone through numerous consultations with various groups to come up with the proposals we have. Again, here we are at second reading taking this to committee so that things can be discussed and we can bring in different types of witnesses and hear what they have to say.

I believe that when we hear what the witnesses have to say, we will see how the consultations we have had are reflected in the way the legislation has been crafted. I believe members will find that after it goes through the committee stage, we will have a great bill coming back from there too.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the House tonight in the debate on Bill C-22, a bill the NDP believes should at least get to the committee so that we can hear from the experts and witnesses who know something about this issue of liability when it comes to nuclear projects as well as about what happens in the offshore.

Government Orders

I need to make some passing comment on what my friend just said recently about Canada's state of regulatory protection for the environment and for communities. Systematically, often through omnibus bills, these massive bills the government has been using, it has been pulling out and destroying pieces of that very same environmental protection law the government says is the best in the world.

The government keeps ripping out pieces of the environmental protection laws we have in place, such as the Fisheries Act and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, and then continues to say that it must be the best in the world. Then it rips out some more and says that it is global-leading environmental protection. Then the government rips out some more and says that it must all be great. That is, of course, not the case. The government has been enabling the speedy approval of oil and gas projects over the last number of years with very little public oversight of any little stipulations.

We can all recall that it was the Prime Minister who got up after getting elected to government and said that within a short time, Canada would become a global energy superpower. That was in 2006. Eight years on, how are the Conservatives doing? Oh, my goodness; they are yelling at the U.S. president because they do not like his delay. They cannot get Enbridge northern gateway past the communities and gain the social licence they need. They have controversies on every single energy project they propose and demand that Canadians just accept them.

When Canadians raise any questions, this is the government's approach to this point when it comes to oil and gas projects. It calls Canadians who raise objections foreign-funded radicals. The Conservatives call them enemies of the state. This is the Conservative attempt to woo Canadians to oil and gas development in Canada. It has had the opposite effect.

It is no wonder that the oil lobby, CAPP, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, just a couple of weeks ago broke away from the Conservatives' public relations strategy, because it was toxic. It was hurting the industry so much that it said it could no longer be associated or in line with the Conservatives' strategy when it comes to speaking to the public. It is going to go its own way. It took them a number of years, but the oil lobby is pretty smart and has a lot of money.

Let us talk about the specifics of the bill. This is of incredible importance to me because I represent northwestern British Columbia, and we are in the target zone. We are ground zero for a bunch of the Conservatives' more misaligned schemes when it comes to energy development.

Liability and limited liability, as in this bill, are of great interest to us. There is a curious thing I hear, both from progressives and from very conservative constituents, when it comes to who pays the costs when there is an oil disaster. Both from the right and the left, there is a curiosity as to why there is a liability placed over top of oil companies at all.

When a limit is put on the liability to which a company is exposed, what the government is effectively saying is that the company can be sued, but only up to a certain point, and beyond

that, there is cap and it cannot be held responsible or made to pay compensation beyond that cap.

One would wonder, of all the industries in the world, why the oil and gas industry would be the one to receive what is in effect a subsidy from the public. It is a subsidy because any cleanup costs beyond that cap are picked up by the Canadian public.

It makes no sense. It does not happen to other industries, except for nuclear, which is also included in this bill, but it happens for oil and gas. Why is that? It is because the oil and gas industry has really good lobbyists. One told me a funny little joke the other day. I guess it is a joke within the oil lobbyist circle. He said that when the oil lobby wants the Conservative government to know it wants something, it does not phone; it just rolls over in bed and whispers in the government's ear.

While I thought that image was a little disturbing, it seems to be true. When it comes to the Conservative government, whatever oil wants, oil gets.

With the liability question that is front of us, let us take nuclear for just a second. Let us step away and look at the process we are under. We see that this bill, which has massive implications for the Canadian people, is under time allocation. That means that the government has decided to restrict the debate.

All through the back and forth on this restriction of debate, the Conservatives have said that they want to show up to work, and yet the Conservatives have missed 11 speaking spots so far. That is 11 shifts they have not shown up for.

● (2100)

In most Canadian workplaces, if workers have a shift that they do not show up to, there would be some sort of consequence. I know that as an employer, I would be somewhat suspicious of employees who said they wanted to work hard and yet did not show up to work, and so be it.

On nuclear liability, for example, the Conservatives previously attempted to raise the liability cap to \$650 million, and the New Democrats were the only ones in this House—and I remember, because I sat on the committee—who said that \$650 million might be a little low. We suggested \$1 billion just as a good place to start. The Conservatives and Liberals at the time said that was outrageous, that we would kill the nuclear industry in Canada, that we would make it unaffordable, that it was irresponsible.

Then Fukushima happened. Does it not often seem an unfortunate reality that significant and painful disasters have to occur before governments suddenly snap awake and realize? As of today, current costs of that one disaster in Japan have hit \$58 billion.

The Conservatives will wave this bill around and say they are being tough and that \$1 billion is just an extraordinary amount of money for a company to hold. However, when things go wrong at a nuclear plant, they go really wrong. People die and get exposed to radiation, and all sorts of serious consequences happen to people in the area.

Government Orders

The idea that the public would pick up the cost beyond \$1 billion is one that we found questionable. We raised this before, and the Conservatives and the Liberals said it was a terrible idea. Then suddenly they adopted that terrible idea. They now call it a great idea. I guess that is how ideas transform from “terrible” when they come from the opposition to “great” when they come from the government.

Let us move over to offshore oil and gas liability, because that is also discussed here.

To put it in context, the cost of the massive and disastrous spill that happened in the gulf as a result of BP's actions is at somewhere near \$28 billion in damages so far. I was just looking this up online, and some of these estimates may double or triple that amount, approaching \$70 billion in compensation for damages because it was such a terrible thing. One of the regions the government wants to drill in is the high Arctic and the Beaufort, and one of the stipulations that sits on the books in Canada right now is that the company that is drilling must have the capacity to drill what is called a “relief well” in the same season.

It was only a relief well, as people will remember, that was ultimately able to stop that terrible disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. The workers tried absolutely everything to stop the oil from coming up, but it was only by drilling a second well and then going below where it was being released that they were eventually able to get enough cement and solids in there to be able to cap it.

In the Arctic, the oil companies came to the current government and very quietly and secretly said, “Let us get rid of that stipulation”. Why did they want to get rid of the stipulation in the Arctic in particular? It was because having the capacity to drill a relief well in the same season is not possible. The government and industry know that, yet they want to drill in the Arctic.

This is a strange irony that because of the results of climate change and inaction from governments like this Conservative government, we have seen Arctic ice melt and recede at an incredible pace. More of the Arctic is becoming exposed, which has a compounding effect. As we all know, the more ice retreats, the worse the situation gets.

The Conservatives' reaction to such a disaster and its impact on such a sensitive region as the Arctic was to celebrate. They said, “Now we can go and drill. Is that not so exciting?”, thereby adding insult to injury by pulling more oil up out of the ground. We know we have left behind all the cheap, accessible, and relatively safe oil in the world. We have moved over. We are now dealing with very expensive and much more dangerous oil that is harder to get at.

It is unfortunate that it requires a disaster, a significant news event that people cover from around the world.

The idea that we maintain is that if the profits are being held and enjoyed by the private sector, then why, for goodness' sake, would the risks be taken on by the public? The Conservatives want to privatize the profits but socialize the risks.

We argue this on the issue of temporary foreign workers and we will argue it on this issue as well. The free market has a call and response. The oil game is sometimes a bit of a risk and a roulette

wheel, and if the companies want to play this game, if they are going to risk our environment, our communities, and our economy, then they should bear the cost of that risk. The public should not be picking up the tab.

● (2105)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to have an opportunity to put some questions to the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley because, unlike the hon. member for Red Deer, I suspect he may have read Bill C-22 and knows there is nothing in the bill that has anything to do with tankers or a safety regime for shipping oil in tankers. I mean no disrespect to the hon. member for Red Deer. I think he was handed a speech he had not written that spoke to a lot of measures that have nothing to do with Bill C-22.

The tanker methods and measures that were mentioned by the hon. member for Red Deer, such as double-hulled tankers, which are not in Bill C-22, have been required globally since 1978. I think there should be a statute of limitations on how often this administration can announce a global standard that has existed since 1978, but which, by the way, is not mentioned in Bill C-22.

Let us talk about Bill C-22, which is a regime for liability for drilling in the offshore. That is what it is about. It sets limits that, as the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has pointed out, will do absolutely nothing to deal with a major disaster such as may happen if they go ahead and drill a deepwater oil well called Old Harry in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where no one should be drilling for oil.

I want to ask my hon. colleague one specific question, because I find it fascinating. On page 35 of Bill C-22, we find this wonderful statement about violations of the act. It states, “The purpose of the penalty is to promote compliance with this Act and not to punish”.

What does he make of that?

● (2110)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, that statement buried within the bill tells us that certainly the Conservative government would never want to punish anybody in the oil sector. If people happen to donate to an environmental charity or be part of a social justice group, they would all be looking for punishment from the Conservatives, but if they are in oil, they are okay.

The association to risk is what is important here. If people could go to a casino and gamble knowing that no matter how much they gambled, they could only lose \$100, it would probably influence the way they gambled. They would bet lots of money, knowing that there was no way for them to lose more than this maximum amount.

I do not suggest that drilling for oil is exactly like going to Vegas, but it has some similar qualities. The oil companies will say it is a one-in-a-thousand chance. They are into risk, but if a cap is placed on that risk, it encourages behaviour that we do not want, which is high-risk behaviour.

Government Orders

Finally, the member made the point that a lot of the Conservatives' speeches are about tanker traffic and pipelines and so on. What the Conservatives are doing is so obvious that it is a bit unseemly. They are trying to soften the ground for the announcement that is coming with respect to Enbridge and the northern gateway. That is what this is about. They want the public to believe that somehow double-hulled tankers are going to save the day. They have been in place for more than a generation, and suddenly the Conservatives are going to talk tough on oil. No one is going to believe them, because it is not true.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of oil spill examples for the member that he could maybe comment on.

One oil spill, of course, was Lac-Mégantic. The railroad that was licensed to operate by the government was licensed to operate on the basis of \$25 million in liability. That is all it was required to carry to have a licence. It was clearly not enough. We know the result: the taxpayer is on the hook for the rest.

The other example is a gentleman in Fredericton, New Brunswick, who several years ago bought a home which, he discovered, had a leaky oil tank in the back yard that had been leaking through the town. The several million dollars in damages were entirely the responsibility of the homeowner. There was no liability cap. There was no government paying the bill. That is the reality of what goes on with oil spills in Canada: an individual is in big trouble, but companies are okay.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the only caveat I would put to his question is that there are many Canadian companies, from IT to the automotive sector and others, that do not enjoy this subsidy. That is what it is, because the cost of carrying insurance is a cost of doing business. If companies lower the amount of insurance they have to carry, they lower the cost of doing business. If somebody else is picking that cost up and it is the public, that is a public subsidy. I can hear Mr. Hudak screaming in the rafters now, "No more corporate welfare".

Conservatives are so often very comfortable with the idea of corporate subsidies, particularly for corporations that do not need it because they have such an enormous amount of wealth. Oil is \$105 a barrel. They are pulling it out of the ground. They are making the money.

If they are taking those risks and enjoying that profit, then certainly they should assume that risk and not spread it out among the hard-working Canadians who had nothing to do with the accidents that those oil companies created.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I start, I must apologize to my interpreting friends. I have given them my notes, but I am going to go a little off the cuff here because I have a few things to say beforehand.

First, I would like to say that I am really fortunate today in just having had supper with some good friends from Chilliwack, Dennis and Penny Martens, who are right there watching me. Dennis and I went to UBC together in the early sixties. It is kind of neat to be able to talk to him and Penny.

I feel really privileged to have followed my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley. He was in my riding just last week, actually, talking to people about the proposed Enbridge pipeline and its consequences, and I will talk about this a bit later. I had a chance to visit the beautiful pristine area that he lives in to see exactly what the consequences of that proposed pipeline would be.

I have some notes here, and I will just ask the interpreters to bear with me.

I just want to say that it seems that the current government that I have been faced with for the last eight years since I have been here is not really friendly with respect to looking after our environment and looking after the people of Canada.

There are many fine individuals in that party, and I see them here. We have a good relationship. They treat me well, with respect, but collectively, the current government has done a lot to our country that will take us a long time to recover from once it is no longer in power.

The bill would update Canada's nuclear liability regime to specify the conditions and procedures for compensation of victims.

It would maintain the principles of absolute fault or no fault, limited and exclusive, except for situations of war or terrorist attacks.

It would extend the limitation period for submitting compensation claims for bodily injury from 10 years to 30 years to address latent illnesses. It would maintain the 10-year period for all other forms of damage.

The nuclear liability changes would apply to Canadian nuclear facilities, such as nuclear power plants, research reactors, fuel processing plants, and facilities for managing used nuclear fuel.

It would also update Canada's offshore liability regime for oil and gas exploration and operations to prevent incidents and ensure swift response in the event of a spill. I will talk a little bit about that later.

It would maintain unlimited operator liability for fault or negligence.

It would increase the absolute liability limit from \$40 million in the Arctic and \$30 million in the Atlantic to \$1 billion for offshore oil.

It would reference the polluter pays principle explicitly in legislation to establish clearly and formally that polluters would be held accountable. That is a good thing.

However, let me say a few words on offshore oil spills in general.

The fact that the absolute liability limit would be increased to \$1 billion should not—and I repeat, should not—be a green light to approve further tanker traffic off our B.C. coast. That is what my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley was alluding to: the fact that all of this discussion is somehow supposed to lay the groundwork for this wonderful project in northern British Columbia.

As members are aware, I am sure, after all these years the Alaskan coastline is still seeing effects of the *Exxon Valdez* spill.

Government Orders

At the invitation of my colleague, the MP for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, I had a chance to visit our northwestern coastline communities of Terrace, Kitimat, and Kitimaat Village. I and some of my NDP colleagues heard what the people had to say about the proposed Enbridge northern gateway pipeline.

As we have seen from the recent vote or referendum in Kitimat, 60% of the people voted against the pipeline, in spite of the huge amount of money spent by the oil industry going door to door to try to get support for the pipeline.

When I was there, we had a meeting with something like 150 people in Terrace, and people of all political stripes do not want the project to go through. At the meeting in Terrace, we learned that if roughly 30% of the oil can be recuperated after a regular oil spill, such as occurred with the *Exxon Valdez* spill, that is considered excellent.

However, if we can recuperate 7% from a spill of raw bitumen, that is also considered excellent.

● (2115)

It does not really matter what the liability is, once raw bitumen is spilled in the ocean, the environment is basically destroyed forever. This is the point that people in northern communities, people in the area I represent and all over British Columbia are trying to get across. Thousands of jobs in the tourist and fishing industries will be lost permanently. It is not just that the oil is spilled, the company has a liability of \$1 billion, and we clean it up. We can clean up only 7% of it, and that is considered excellent. If we do a good job, that is probably 3.5%. If we do a terrible job, we would probably clean up 2% of the bitumen. We cannot allow tanker traffic in the northern coastline. It is as simple as that.

People in my province are mobilizing against this project. For the sake of future generations, we cannot let this project take place. It is often expedient not only for the current government of the day but for governments of all political parties that happen to be in power to think in the short range. It does not matter if governments are Conservative, Liberal, NDP, or Green; we need governments that look to the future. The future is our children and grandchildren. What is the coastline and the province of British Columbia going to be like in the future?

The grandchildren of my friends Dennis and Penny are not going to read in the paper that they cannot go to northern B.C. because the coastline is polluted because a tanker just spilt raw bitumen and none of it was recuperated. Surely we can increase our own refining capacity to create jobs in Canada. I know my party is working on a policy that when we hopefully assume government, we will be able to transition into this green energy strategy that other countries have done, which will provide jobs to millions of people as we transition out of the fossil fuel industry.

If we look at the predictions of climate change, if we look at what is happening in other countries, it is logical. We have this chance, and in the meantime we can increase our oil refining capacity. If we have an oil industry, why not keep the jobs here? For the sake of a few hundred or a thousand jobs for a short period of time, should we build a pipeline and get some hundreds of tankers a year moving in areas that are prone to high gales and accidents? Why would we

do that, rather than taking this product that we take out of the ground and refining it somewhere in our country? We would create jobs as we keep the economy moving, and we would move toward a green energy strategy. That would be a win-win situation. I would prefer that we create jobs in Canada rather than somewhere in Asia.

● (2120)

[*Translation*]

The bill before us strengthens the current liability regime but will not help protect the environment, or Canadian taxpayers either, because it still exposes them to risk.

The Conservatives constantly lag behind our international partners. They disregard best practices that are used to identify inadequate liability regimes.

We have previously criticized the inadequacy of nuclear liability limits. Even though these provisions must be considered a step in the right direction relative to current limits, this bill does not duly reflect the actual risks Canadians face. We hope to address this point in committee. Consequently, this bill must absolutely be referred to committee. We need to hear from witnesses.

I eagerly await my colleagues' questions.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the member's closing comments. He talked about the importance of the bill going to committee, and we concur.

There is no doubt that this is a step forward in principle. There are many aspects of the legislation that are long overdue. However, it is important to recognize that with some strategic amendments, we could give more strength to the legislation. This could enrich the legislation to the point where it would be stronger, and all of us would benefit from that.

To what degree does the member feel the government will be open to opposition amendments? It seems, even from the government side, that there is a need to add some additional meat to the bones. Would he like to provide comments on how important it is for us to make those changes?

● (2125)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for all of his hard work on behalf of his constituents.

Today, I read an op-ed in the *Manitoba Co-operator*, where my colleague from Welland was quoted as saying that we all came together as parties to move through Bill C-30, the railway act. Here we had this instance of co-operation. It is something that often does not happen. All parties got together, the government listened, we made suggestions and, all of a sudden, we had a bill that benefited all Canadians.

Government Orders

This is a golden opportunity for this bill to go to committee and for the government to listen and not do what it did, for example, when I was on the agriculture committee studying the food safety bill. Both the NDP and the Liberal Party provided something like 25 amendments, and not one was accepted. That is not how government works and that is not how democracy should work. This is an opportunity.

I welcome the question from the member for Winnipeg North. I really hope that once it gets to committee, we will have this debate and strengthen the bill so it will be our bill on behalf of Canadians, not just the government's bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague for his excellent speech. He provided an excellent explanation of all the good aspects of the bill and of the elements that should be fixed.

The NDP, the official opposition, supports the polluter pays principle. The Conservatives claim they also support the polluter pays principle. However, although this bill is a step in the right direction, it does not quite go far enough. Once again, the taxpayers, the everyday citizen, including the people of Drummond who pay their taxes, will have to foot the bill for any disasters that result from accidents.

Could my colleague speak a little more about his position on the polluter pays principle? How would the bill have to be improved in order to observe the polluter pays principle, which is a principle of sustainable development?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I also thank him for the work he does for his constituents and the work he does in the House.

Taxpayers should not be responsible for the mistakes made by large corporations. Oil companies must absolutely contribute and must pay when there are environmental risks. That should not be up to taxpayers.

The issue is not only the \$1-billion limit. What would happen if it cost \$2 billion? Would that mean that taxpayers would have to cover the \$1-billion difference? I do not think so.

The bill must absolutely include the polluter pays principle, not just for the nuclear and oil industries, but also for all industries. If you run the risk, you pay the price.

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, agreeing on legislation is already quite a difficult exercise, but the other problem is that, with this government, passing legislation is absolutely no guarantee that it will be implemented.

We are told that we will have very strict safety standards. It looks really nice on paper, but what about their day-to-day application?

For the past two years, the practice of transporting oil by rail has increased by 900%. We should therefore expect that there is a decent railway safety system in place. Is there?

Regarding the number of audit investigations, only 26% of the minimum number of audits is carried out, and 100% of these 26% are poorly done. That is unbelievable. In addition, there is no follow-

up of violations. This has got to be the pinnacle of mediocrity. It is a remake of the Pan Am Airways scandal, when they charged clients an additional fee to guarantee their safety, but it was only a marketing scheme. In fact, the company had changed absolutely nothing. We also know what happened with Lockerbie. This is another problem.

We can argue about legislation, but when the government still refuses to implement it, this is when we get such poor results. This is when a Lac-Mégantic disaster happens.

There have been major developments in terms of nuclear liability. The nuclear industry of 1976 and the nuclear industry of today are very different creatures. There are mining facilities where ore enrichment is carried out. This is also a dangerous process. Nuclear plants are not the only ones at risk of exploding. Nuclear plant explosions are bad enough, but now there are more and bigger mines that have ore enrichment processes. That is dangerous. This is something new. It must be discussed.

The nuclear industry also produces medical materials for treatments. Radioactivity is used for medical purposes, if you will. There are plants that make these materials. There are plants that handle radioactive materials. This is dangerous. We must discuss this as well. Therefore, the dangers that were noted in 1976 are very different from the dangers today. We must talk about this and we must make regulations. We must be sure that Canadians are protected and that they are compensated adequately in the event of an accident.

If it costs \$2 billion or \$3 billion, will you tell Canadians that you are sorry and that it is first come first served? When there is no more money, will you say that is just too bad for them? I do not think that Canadians will particularly like this. It will be up to the taxpayers to foot the bill.

For people who say they want to protect taxpayers, they are being awfully generous to those who systematically expect taxpayers to pick up the tab. Canadians should not be the ones paying the price for these situations.

This law has been in need of change since 1976. Here is a fact: in 1976, inflation was at 10%.

I do not need to point out that, even back then, \$40 million was too little. Imagine what that is worth now. It is not enough for anything. All it would pay for is relocating people to a hotel for a few days. That would eat up the \$40 million. That number really needs updating.

We want something comprehensive. That is why we are sending it to committee. We have things to talk about and we need to hear from experts. The experts will give us some very interesting information. We have to take the time to listen to them.

What can I say about the wonderful stuff that is oil? Do we need it? Yes. Will we keep needing it? Yes.

I listened to the comments by my colleague from British Columbia. When I was in the northern part of that province, I saw what they were using as a rescue boat.

Government Orders

• (2130)

Believe it or not, it was basically a rowboat. Anyone who thinks a little motorboat can stop an out-of-control tanker from running aground off the coast of British Columbia is mistaken. The Coast Guard is definitely not equipped to deal with these challenges. They have nothing.

Unfortunately, the people who promise to respect the environment and so on are the same detestable bunch that did such a wonderful job in Port Valdez, the same rotten pack that did such fabulous work in the Gulf of Guinea and the Gulf of Mexico, the same despicable gang that performed so admirably off the coast of the Philippines. Those people never paid the bills. The *Exxon Valdez* cost \$7 billion, and the case is still before the courts. Nobody was ever compensated, and that was a long time ago now. No, those people do not want to pay for their irresponsible actions. It might be a good idea for Canada to have ways to protect itself from that.

• (2135)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 9:36 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier this day, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

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

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PROTECTING CANADIANS FROM UNSAFE DRUGS ACT (VANESSA'S LAW)

BILL C-17—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must advise that agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-17, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act.

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

* * *

VETERANS HIRING ACT

BILL C-27—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must advise that agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-27, an act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (enhancing hiring

opportunities for certain serving and former members of the Canadian Forces).

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

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PROHIBITING CLUSTER MUNITIONS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): There are three motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-6. Motions Nos. 1 to 3 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): moved:

That Bill C-6 be amended by deleting the short title.

Ms. Elizabeth May (seconded by the hon. member for Ottawa Centre) moved:

That Bill C-6 be amended by deleting Clause 4.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): moved:

That Bill C-6 be amended by deleting Clause 11.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak to our amendments to Bill C-6.

We have debated this bill before. In fact, we had an iteration of the bill from the Senate before, in which we had concerns at the time of where the bill was originating from. I will not go over that tonight.

Bill C-6 is a very important piece of legislation. Sadly, it took the government quite a while to bring in legislation for the cluster munitions treaty.

Perhaps I will start by going over the treaty itself. The convention was built upon the Ottawa treaty, which was very successful, and we are all very proud of it. That was the Ottawa land mines treaty convention. It was built upon that treaty to rid the world of these horrific weapons: cluster munitions. It was signed by 118 countries, which is significant as that is more than three-quarters of the member states of the UN, with 84 countries ratifying it. In fact, in terms of the process, there were negotiations, and the Dublin process and Oslo process followed it. What we ended up with was a convention that was important for the whole issue of disarmament and to rid the world of these horrific munitions.

Government Orders

I think everyone is aware of what land mines are, but what is so horrific about cluster munitions is that they are very difficult to source. They fall from the sky and are particularly vicious in the sense that they are often misunderstood by those in war zones as being toys. These bombs are as small as a D battery. These bomblets are dropped from the sky and explode across the terrain. They are very difficult to discover and, of course, to clean up. The damage caused from them has been horrific in conflicts right across the world. They have maimed and killed children and adults. People have wanted to rid the world of these munitions for a very long time.

It is important to note that at times the world has come together to focus on disarmament. I mentioned the Ottawa treaty, which was to work to rid the world of land mines. That has been successful, but more work needs to be done. However, this is on cluster munitions, which is something that people have worked on for quite a while.

I have two testimonies to give members an idea of the cluster munition.

The first is from Remzi Mehmeti from South Serbia. Remzi's 15-year-old son was walking home with his three friends and picked up two unexploded cluster bomblets. His son died and his friends were injured.

This testimony is from Mai Chi, who is a demining expert in Vietnam.

I saw the pliers and a pair of broken sunglasses that the children had used to tamper with the submunition, in an attempt to get scrap metal to sell for cash...

By the way, this is a typical kind of work for children in developing countries.

The quote goes on with:

I saw a pair of torn sandals, a hole on the floor and the ball bearings from the submunition.

I walked closer to the bed in the centre of the house. Someone pulled the blanket up, revealing two dead bodies. Legs and hands were smashed and blown away.

What a terrifying scene. I closed my eyes, feeling breathless and ran out. People were crying louder and louder.

These children had taken scrap metal, brought it home and did what they usually did with scrap metal, which was pull it apart. In doing so, they had no idea they were pulling apart a cluster munition. It blew up and killed them both. This is why we have to get rid of cluster munitions.

● (2140)

I am saddened to say that we have tried to work with the government. We have made propositions. We have brought amendments tonight to change the implementation of this treaty. As members know, when a state signs a treaty, that is the first step. It is to say that the treaty is here and we will sign it. For instance, I was encouraging the government today to sign the Arms Trade Treaty. As was mentioned by a colleague in the House, we have not done so, along with other countries like Russia, Syria, and other countries that are the usual suspects in not signing these treaties.

Once the treaty is signed, it has to be implemented, and that takes legislation. This bill has been pilloried by many experts and those who strongly believe in the whole idea of banning the world of cluster munitions. The reason is clause 11 primarily, but also other sections. Clause 11 allows Canadian Forces to be in theatre when

cluster munitions are used. That goes against what we did in the land mines treaty wherein, if we were in theatre with any country that had not signed on to the Ottawa treaty, we would not be in joint operations with them while they were using those particular armaments. This bill has a void in it, a loophole, which basically says that we can be in theatre where one of our allies is using these munitions. This is not acceptable.

I will read clause 11 into the record, but I will omit the first part of the paragraph. It allows "Canada and a state that is not a party to the Convention" to direct or authorize "an activity that may involve the use, acquisition, possession, import or export of a cluster munition".

What that does is basically work against the whole notion and spirit of the convention. I have gone over this with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I have talked to the government on many occasions. Clause 11 works against the spirit and the notion of the convention. What we are saying to the government in these amendments is that if it is interested in taking a leadership role when it comes to cluster munitions, then it has to have the legislation that lives up to that. What the treaty asks of the member states who sign it is to basically get rid any stockpiles they have and not to use them if there is an occasion when there are cluster munitions in theatre. It is fine for us to say that we do not have any or that we will get rid of them, but it is another thing to say that we will not use them.

It is not just the NDP saying this. Let me quote from some of the people who are critical of this legislation, to the point where they are saying that we must vote against this legislation because it undermines the treaty.

For instance, the Red Cross, which never speaks out on legislation, feels strongly about this issue. The Canadian Red Cross and the International Red Cross have said that clause 11 would:

...permit activities that undermine the object and purpose of the [cluster munitions treaty] and ultimately contribute to the continued use of cluster munitions rather than bringing about their elimination.

The Red Cross is saying that clause 11 would permit activities that could undermine the object and purpose of the treaty.

Former Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser said the following at committee:

It is a pity the current Canadian Government, in relation to cluster munitions, does not provide any real lead to the world. Its approach is timid, inadequate and regressive.

This is important to note, because former prime minister Malcolm Fraser is an expert not only on cluster munitions but on disarmament. He knows what he speaks of.

Therefore, our amendments are to try to fix this bill so that we can be proud of our signature on the treaty. Sadly, what the Conservatives have done is give us a treaty that undermines their reputation and their signature, and we believe it is not adequate.

● (2145)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague on his speech. He has done a lot of work on this issue. I would just very briefly ask him about the fact that when it comes to clause 11, we are not following the spirit of what was done with the former treaty when we talked about land mines. Could he comment and further expand on that?

Government Orders

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Newfoundland is absolutely right. As I said in my speech, what we had with the Ottawa treaty and the implementation of that treaty was clear definition around interoperability: we would not use or be in theatre when land mines were being used by any of our allies. This undermines that.

If I may just read into the record, Paul Hannon, the executive director of Mines Action Canada, said:

Canada should have the best domestic legislation in the world. We need to make it clear that no Canadian will ever be involved with a weapon again but from our reading this legislation falls well short of those standards.

Again, this is one particular section of the bill that really undermines the spirit of the convention and goes in the opposite direction of what we did with the Ottawa protocol and the Ottawa land mines treaty.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his excellent speech. He did a fine job explaining how the Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions is seriously flawed.

We are in the process of distorting the Convention on Cluster Munitions when, as my honourable colleague explained so well, it is a convention that urgently needs to be signed. A total of 113 countries have already signed it and 84 countries have ratified it, while Canada is lagging behind on this international issue. This is not the first time under the Conservative government that Canada has been lagging behind at the international level when it should be leading by example. In that respect, the passage of this bill as it is currently worded would be a major step back in terms of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

I would like my colleague to speak to the importance of adopting the amendments we are proposing so that we can resume our role as a leader in international affairs, including in this area.

• (2150)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises a good point.

I will read into the record what was said by Earl Turcotte, one of the former negotiators for DFAIT on this treaty. He left because he saw what was happening. He said the following:

...the proposed legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the convention, to date.

It fails to fulfill Canada's obligations under international humanitarian law; it fails to protect vulnerable civilians in war-ravaged countries around the world; it betrays the trust of sister states who negotiated this treaty in good faith, and it fails Canadians who expect far better from our nation.

This is one of the people who helped negotiate the treaty on our behalf. I should note, which I did not mention in my comments and is also important to note, that these munitions disproportionately affect civilians. More than 90% of the people who are affected by these horrific Denel munitions are civilians. This is something we need to take seriously. We have to get it right, and that is why we are proposing the amendments to the legislation: to get it right.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saainich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to begin my remarks by expressing my deep gratitude to the

hon. member for Ottawa Centre, both for his championing of this issue and for his generosity in seconding my amendment this evening, so that I can explain the reasons that the Green Party is so very disappointed with what is before us here in Bill C-6.

We had a chance to get it right. We had a chance to stand with the community of nations and fulfill the promise of the treaty to ban cluster munitions. As my hon. colleague has mentioned, Canada played a significant role. We got a reputation globally as being willing to step out ahead when there was the Ottawa process to deal with land mines. It is in that vein that we are going to go forward and deal with cluster munitions.

As was just mentioned, it is estimated that between 95% and 98% of the casualties from cluster munitions are civilians. Of that, 40% are children. These are not weapons of war. These are monstrous tools of destruction for the innocent, and Canada should rightly be at the forefront in ensuring that such munitions are never used again.

I want to quote from the treaty, which we have actually signed. We have signed this convention, and the legislation before us is required as a tool to bring that treaty into force for Canada. For ratification we need a domestic law. Unfortunately, this domestic law has tilted in the wrong direction.

Let us just look at the language of the convention. Canada has signed this treaty. As a state party to the convention, we are:

Deeply concerned that civilian populations and individual citizens continue to bear the brunt of armed conflict.

Determined [that is a good verb] to put an end for all time to the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions at the time of their use, when they fail to function as intended or when they are abandoned.

Concerned that cluster munition remnants kill or maim civilians, including women and children....

In this vein, we continue to have the language of commitment, of concern to protect human life from weapons that are designed specifically to destroy human populations, civilian populations, and do damage to the innocent.

The operative section of the convention is very important, and I want to return to it for a few of the things that the bill fails to do. Article 1, the general obligations and scope of application, commits Canada to the following:

1. Each State Party undertakes never under any circumstances to:

(a) Use cluster munitions;

(b) Develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer to anyone, directly or indirectly, cluster munitions;

The third part of this important paragraph is really significant. It states:

(c) Assist, encourage or induce anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Convention.

Government Orders

Those are the key operative phrases. Then we have Bill C-6, which is largely a carve-out that says we were just kidding when we said “never under any circumstances”. We have a bunch of circumstances in which Canadian Armed Forces are going to be working alongside one of our military allies. It is clearly intended. As my hon. friend mentioned, so far the United States has not ratified this treaty, so we know that we might be in a theatre of operations—as we now describe wars—with our allies, namely the United States. They might be using cluster munitions, and we would want to safeguard our ability to work alongside them.

I will acknowledge and I do accept that this is a large and important move for this particular Conservative administration, because it so rarely changes any bill. My hon. friend, who is the parliamentary secretary, moved in committee to remove the opportunity for any Canadian soldier or military operation to actually use the weapons, but the bill still allows us to participate, to be alongside in a shared military operation with an ally that is not a party to this convention.

• (2155)

There was other language put forward in various presentations to the committee that would have protected Canadian operations if they were in such a shared military operation with a non-party state. There was other language that would have worked very well. Human Rights Watch suggested that we could replace clause 11 with the following:

Section 6 does not prohibit a person who is subject to the Code of Service Discipline under any of the paragraphs...[which are referenced] of the National Defence Act or who is an employee as defined...[and this is the operative portion] in the course of military cooperation, our combined military operations involving Canada and a state that is not a party to the Convention, from *merely participating in military cooperation or operations with a foreign country that is not a party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions*.

That would have vouchsafed. That would have been the protection the Canadian military would have needed for the circumstance for which we have created a far too aggressive exemption in clause 11.

It is a great tragedy that we had one amendment. I have to say that one amendment in the current context of this particular Parliament, coming from the government, is unusual and it was welcomed, but it did not go far enough to rescue this from being, as my hon. friend has said, the weakest of all the implementing legislation of any nation that has so far signed this convention.

It leaves us in a position that is really rather shameful.

I want to return to one of the other areas. I mentioned that in the convention language, we are obligated as a convention party to do nothing to assist or induce anyone to engage in an activity prohibited here.

A great number of nations have, in interpreting that section in which we are prohibited from assisting, interpreted it very clearly to mean that there should be a ban on investment. There should be no investments allowed. In order to comply with this treaty, Canada should ban anyone from investing in any of the operations of any of the providers of cluster munitions.

There is nothing in this legislation that stops companies in Canada or investors in Canada from actually assisting through their financial

investments. That is the kind of amendment that should have been included, and it is not here.

I pointed out that the following nations have actually ensured, through legislation, that no investment in cluster munitions be allowed. That is included in legislation from Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Samoa, and Switzerland.

As an interpretive decision, so too have other nations said that they understand this convention to mean that they must not allow any investment in cluster munitions. In taking the interpretive decision, the U.K. and a larger group of nations, including Germany, Norway, and many others, have decided they cannot understand this convention without understanding that they have to ban investment in cluster munitions.

We have lost the moral high ground here. We are slipping down to where we have signed a convention that says we are completely committed to never, under any circumstance, use or encourage or assist in the spread of these deadly, immoral weapons of assault on civilians. We will never do that, we say, yet somehow, when we read Bill C-6, we feel that we have crossed our fingers behind our backs. We mean “never” most of the time, but sometimes we are going to be in a theatre of war and we do not want to be too bound by our word under the convention to ban cluster munitions.

In this place we still have time to remedy that. The hon. member for Ottawa South has put forward an amendment. The Green Party has put forward an amendment. Should this House assembled decide that Canada can reclaim the moral high ground, we still have time.

We have the moral courage. We are Canadians. We stand for peace. We believe that children should not be blown up because they find a piece of metal and think they can recover that scrap metal to buy their family supper.

We are, by God, Canadians, and we stand for peace, and we stand against war, and we stand against cluster munitions. Bill C-6 says “not really”. Let us amend the bill here and now at third reading and report stage.

• (2200)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the global stockpile of cluster munitions and submunitions totals approximately four billion, with a quarter of these in U.S. hands right now. In 2006, 22 Canadian Forces members were killed and 112 were wounded in Afghanistan as a result of land mines, cluster bombs, and other explosive devices. This is a real question for us right now, for reasons I just mentioned, if we do not get this right and we do not implement this treaty. I believe it is not just about this treaty, but it is about a precedent we are setting when it comes to international treaties. I would like her comment on that.

In committee the Conservatives said that it would not happen. They said we would never have a situation in which one of our generals would order one of our Canadian Forces members to go in theatre with a member state that had cluster munitions. However, I do not think that is good enough. It is about the precedents we are setting by undermining the treaty. I would like to hear her comments on that as well.

Government Orders

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, for my hon. friend from Ottawa Centre, I would love to believe that the hypothetical would not arise, but we are living in a time when the basic understanding of how a civilized country behaves seems to be slipping between our fingers.

Our greatest ally and friend is the United States. I have great respect for Barack Obama and I think he is a wonderful and inspiring human being, except he has ordered more unmanned drones to commit illegal murders in other countries than any previous U.S. president. We seem to be taking a very mild approach to the threat of torture. I never thought I would hear a Canadian minister of the crown speak of the possibility that because other things were a bigger threat, the government did not really mind if somebody got information by torture.

There is a lot of moral relativism going on right now in relation to whether we are a civilized country and stand for anything. I believe we are. I believe we always will be. However, this kind of climb down from the treaty commitments that we made, bringing forward legislation that is so weak, indicates that we are prepared to say one thing and do another, because when push comes to shove, we do not stand for anything. I do not think that is what Canadians want to see.

• (2205)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity on many occasions to sit down and have discussions with a former minister of foreign affairs, Lloyd Axworthy. Lloyd played a very important role in terms of the land mines deal that ultimately demonstrated that Canada, if it did it right, could play a very strong leadership role on issues of this nature.

Could the leader of the Green Party provide some comment on the leadership role Canada could play if it chose to do so? What I reflect on is the land mine treaty deal in which Canada did play a critical role, and that is why we are where we are today with the land mines.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the lines of our former minister of foreign affairs Lloyd Axworthy to whom the member refers. He used to say that we punched above our weight. We really do. We are a relatively small population of the globe, a relatively small economy, yet Canadian leadership has accomplished so much historically. That is not a small thing.

Going back further, before he was prime minister the former minister of foreign affairs, Lester B. Pearson, resolved the Suez Crisis in such a way that he won the Nobel Peace Prize. In that exercise, he created the concept of having a peacekeeping force. It is not for nothing. It has been Canadian leadership in drafting the UN charter, the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the Law of the Sea.

If we look around the world at some of the fundamental documents that speak to multilateralism and improving the life of a community of nations through a system of rules and respect, we see that Canadian leadership has always been there. Now we are losing ground. We are losing our global reputation. I see it every time I go to a climate negotiation. It breaks my heart when people look at our accreditation and say, "Oh you're Canadian. Why do you people even bother coming anymore?"

We need to reclaim that global leadership. If we accept the amendments before us, we can begin to rebuild that reputation.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, Canada has long recognized that explosive remnants of war, such as cluster munitions, have a devastating humanitarian impact on individuals and communities. Not only does their presence hinder the development of communities by rendering the land or infrastructure inaccessible, but they are often found by children who are attracted by their bright colours and not aware of the deadly danger they pose. Even when they do not kill, cluster munitions have caused horrific injuries that seriously jeopardize the future of those affected and their families.

Canada has long been committed to protecting civilians against the indiscriminate effects of explosive remnants of war. As such, Canada actively participated in the effort to rid the world of these weapons and signed the resulting Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008.

The proposed prohibiting cluster munitions act reflects the negotiated compromise that was achieved in the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The government believes that the convention strikes the right balance between humanitarian considerations and the need for states parties to protect their legitimate security and defence interests, which in Canada's case includes the need to interact militarily with other countries, including the United States, our closest military ally.

In these circumstances, Canada maintained this fine balance to preserve indispensable military co-operation while, at the same time, renouncing cluster munitions ourselves and furthering the broader goal of a global ban. Security requires military capacity, but it also requires respect for national differences. We will engage in advocacy, but, ultimately, we must respect the sovereign choices of our allies just as we expect them to respect our own choices.

Canada is not alone in the position we are taking. Other countries also seek an end to the use of cluster munitions and want to join the convention, but need to maintain military co-operation so as to safeguard their security. That is why convention negotiations reached the compromise contained in article 21 of the treaty, which allows states parties to conduct military co-operation and operations with states not party. This article and its application are important for the universalization of the treaty and the norms it establishes. Article 21 makes possible a larger membership in the convention, which, in turn, will generate greater momentum toward the eventual complete elimination of cluster munitions.

Government Orders

The implementing legislation we are debating today, if enacted, would allow Canada to ratify and fully implement its obligations under the convention. It would allow us to do this without refusing to co-operate with our closest friends and allies and without sacrificing our own security interests. Ridding the world of cluster munitions is a policy that everyone can agree on and I hope that all members will join us in supporting it.

The convention prohibits Canada from engaging in activities that would involve cluster munitions, subject to exceptions for military co-operation and other permitted activities, such as research for defence and clearance purposes. That is a legal obligation on Canada, which we take on when we ratify and which does not require legislation. What the proposed legislation before us does is extend a parallel set of prohibitions and limitations into Canadian domestic law.

The convention prohibits Canada from the use, development, making, acquisition, possession, foreign movement, import and export of cluster munitions and the bill before us today would create parallel offences for people subject to Canadian law. The bill would also extend the criminal prohibitions on aiding, abetting, counselling and attempting or conspiring to commit a prohibited activity. These provisions are important as a means of ensuring that nobody in Canada can take any role in any prohibited activity, even if the actual activity happens in another country which has not made it illegal.

The language of the bill does not copy exactly the language of the convention. Instead, the bill has been drafted in a form that ensures that Canadian courts will apply the offences in a manner consistent with international obligations on Canada itself. For example, the offence of possession includes not only what the convention calls stockpiling, but also the possession of even a single munition or submunition.

● (2210)

Hon. members should take note that the offences delineated in the bill are broad and exclusions from them are narrow. They have been strictly limited so they can only apply to persons who are engaged in activities related to military co-operation and operations involving the government, only when the activity in question is part of a permitted form of military co-operation and only when the other country involved is not a party to the convention. This is very important because it means that the other countries gradually accede to the convention and denounce these munitions, the legal exclusions permitted by the bill become progressively narrower.

The offences and exclusions also reflect the fact that the Canadian Armed Forces, which are now of the Canadian state and therefore fully subject to the treaty, cannot use cluster munitions. To give added assurances, the government agreed to amend the bill to prohibit the direct use of cluster munitions by Canadian Armed Forces personnel when on exchange or secondment with states not party to the convention. This amendment would ensure what the Government had intended all along, and which a Canadian Armed Forces order will reinforce, that members of the Canadian Armed Forces will never directly use cluster munitions at any time, even when they are on exchange with a non-state party's military unit.

If the Canadian Armed Forces are in exclusive control of the choice of munitions to be used, they are also prohibited from even

requesting their use. However, if the choice of munitions used is under the control of another country, then the personnel involved will not be subject to prosecution for doing so. For example, a Canadian soldier who is under fire is allowed to call upon an ally for support and can ask for help even with the knowledge that the ally will or might choose cluster munitions, without any fear of being accused of and prosecuted for this criminal offence.

It is important to highlight that these exceptions apply only to the specific offences established by the bill and not any other crimes against Canadian or international law. Under international law, the indiscriminate or disproportionate use of any weapon is a war crime, whether the weapon is a cluster munition or not, and nothing in the proposed legislation changes this. Other applicable international legal obligations remain fully in force for Canada, as they do for any other states with which we would conduct combined operations.

Once the bill is enacted, Canada will be able to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions and take its full place among the states opposed to the use of these weapons. Even prior to the introduction of the bill, we began fulfilling the provisions of the convention. The Department of National Defence took cluster munitions out of active service some time ago. Some have already been destroyed, and the rest are in the process of being destroyed, as required by the Convention.

Furthermore, we are fulfilling our co-operation and assistance obligation on an ongoing basis. Since 2006, Canada has contributed more than \$215 million to mine action projects that address the impact of explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions. With respect to cluster munitions more specifically, Canada has provided funding to Laos and Lebanon for risk education and cluster munitions clearance activities, as well as to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Palau, and South Sudan for clearance activities. In November of last year, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced \$10 million over the next 18 months to continue Canada's proud tradition of support to demining efforts, victim assistance, and risk awareness programs.

These measures taken outside the framework of the bill we are considering today and were taken before we ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions demonstrates our commitment to the goals of the convention and its full implementation.

In order for this treaty to be effective in the long run, it will be important for as many countries as possible to sign on to it. Ideally, if all countries were to join the treaty, cluster munitions could be completely eliminated around the world. Unfortunately, in the short term that is not likely to happen. Indeed, some countries will need a lot of encouragement to join. It is therefore important for countries like Canada, as well as those friends and allies who share our belief in the goals of this treaty, to encourage those countries that have not yet done so to sign and ratify this treaty as soon as possible. We are working hard to do so.

● (2215)

I hope that all members of the House share with me the hope that Canada will ratify this treaty soon. I therefore urge all members of the House to support this bill.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

The hon. member knows that half the victims of cluster munitions are children, who are particularly drawn to unexploded submunitions because they look like brightly coloured toys.

Does the government agree that we should completely ban this weapon and put our words into action?

[*English*]

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, I thoroughly agree with the member. This is a very dangerous situation for children, who are damaged by these things. I agree with her that they should be banned completely. The unfortunate truth is that many countries still have not done so. As I said in my speech, we are forcing them to do so. Canada would like to do that. Therefore, we are taking a pragmatic approach to this by working with those countries that have not signed and only in a very narrow capacity. On a larger scale, our goal is to make sure that cluster munitions are banned all over the world.

Second, Canada is very much committed to helping those who have already gone through these accidents to ensure that they return to a normal life as quickly as possible by clearing the mines, helping in education, and destroying the mines that have not yet exploded.

• (2220)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question. The interoperability issue, which is in question in clause 11, deserves to be addressed here. In the past, we have addressed it by saying that we strictly believe that we will not involve our military and the members of the military in this type of exercise in other operations. However, in this particular example, this does not seem to be exercised.

I really do not understand the logic in not accepting what we consider to be reasonable amendments to help ameliorate the situation by instructing our personnel to not get involved in this type of activity.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, if the member would go deeper to understand the tremendous co-operation we have with our closest ally, the U.S.A., he would understand why we need a very narrow definition. It is to protect Canadian soldiers so that they do not break our laws.

In the larger frame of things, where possible, as was made very clear in my speech, Canadian soldiers would comply with the requirements of this convention. The need for what this convention is talking about is the bare essence of what Canadian soldiers would apply. However, should it happen that the U.S.A. does not sign this treaty, and we have such massive co-operation with each other, this is to protect Canadian soldiers. We agree with the member that we want to ban these munitions.

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech. He has travelled abroad and has represented Canada proudly. I thank him for his speech tonight as someone who knows this subject very well.

I was not aware of the many good things Canada is doing, not just in terms of education but in helping to clear the scourge of cluster munitions from countries. That kind of international work will be helpful to the people at home to know.

As we look to ratify this particular piece of legislation for this convention on cluster munitions, what would that do? What kind of pressure would that put on countries that have not yet signed on? Canada is doing many things on the international stage to draw consensus in a positive way.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, when Canada signs this convention and more and more countries sign the convention, it would become, as the member of the Green Party said in her speech, a moral obligation for other countries to sign the convention as well.

If they did not sign they would stand out when the whole world, including Canada, is looking to ban this kind of weapon around the world. There would be a moral pressure on other countries to sign this convention.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank all my hon. colleagues for allowing me this time, and as always, I thank my constituents for giving me the honour of speaking to this and other measures.

We have been talking for the past hour about cluster munitions. I just wanted to address the gravity of the situation, in addition to what was said by my hon. colleague from British Columbia, the leader of the Green Party.

Cluster munitions are a form of air-dropped or ground-launched explosive weapons that release or eject smaller submunitions. Commonly, a cluster bomb ejects explosive bomblets that are designed to kill personnel and destroy vehicles. Other cluster munitions are designed to destroy runways or electric power transmission lines, disperse chemical or biological weapons, or scatter land mines. Some submunition-based weapons can disperse non-munitions, such as leaflets. Of course, that is just a mild form.

As many people have said, over 95% of the victims, when it comes to cluster bombs, are civilians. For these cluster bombs, many would say, ratification has been a long-time coming. In this particular situation, and in all situations around the world, we must respect the spirit of the treaty that was signed.

Because cluster bombs release many small bomblets over a wide area, they pose risks to civilians both during attacks and afterwards. The weapons are prone to indiscriminate effects, especially in populated areas, the larger urban areas. Unexploded bomblets, and this is where it gets even worse, can kill or maim civilians and/or unintended targets long after a conflict has ended, and they are costly to locate and remove.

We draw the similarities between the work we did on the landmine treaty here in Ottawa and our ongoing efforts to defuse landmines around the world.

Government Orders

I am very grateful to have the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C-6. We worked hard to improve the bill while it was before the foreign affairs committee and have met with numerous organizations and individual Canadians who have shared their concerns with us about the legislation. I want to congratulate my colleague from Westmount—Ville-Marie, who was involved in that, for the hard work he accomplished.

Unfortunately, there was one improvement made to the bill, and only one, at committee. On balance, we find it still sorely lacking in terms of meeting Canada's commitments as a signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Canada has long been a leader on humanitarian disarmament, most notably with the Liberal government's leadership in banning the use of landmines, and we must avoid undermining this Canadian tradition of international leadership.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions is an important convention, with an ability to reduce radically the number of cluster bombs and cluster bomb deaths and injuries around the world.

These are particularly heinous and indiscriminate weapons, as I mentioned earlier. Recent research indicates that more than 90% of reported cluster munition casualties are civilians, and about half of these are children, who often mistake these bombs and bomblets as harmless toys.

These are weapons that are hard to target. They are hard to control. Decades after the wars in Southeast Asia, hundreds of civilians continue to lose life and limb to those bombs in countries such as Laos and Vietnam. It not just a problem of the past. Cluster munitions continue to be used in the brutal war in Syria and will leave a legacy of death and injury in that country for years after the war ends.

Canada has a duty to ensure that we hold ourselves to the highest possible humanitarian standard in our international obligations. Leading the fight to ban these weapons would be consistent with that duty.

Bill C-6, Canada's ratification legislation in answer to the treaty, contains serious loopholes, in particular clause 11 of the bill, which has to do with joint operations with states that are not signatories to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

• (2225)

The Conservative government has put in "exceptions" in this section of Bill C-6 that undermine the spirit and the objective of the convention and call into question Canada's commitment to ban cluster munitions.

Earlier I mentioned that we saw one improvement at committee stage. The government finally agreed to amend the wording of the legislation to indicate that Canada could not "use" cluster munitions. The practical effect of this change seems to mean that Canadian soldiers operating as part of joint military missions with non-signatory countries would be prohibited from dropping a cluster bomb.

However, as pointed out by the Mennonite Central Committee and other expert witnesses, Canadian Forces could still facilitate the

ongoing use of these weapons in many instances, and here they are: directing or authorizing an activity that may involve the use, acquisition, possession, import, or export of a cluster munition; expressly requesting the use of a cluster munition; acquiring, possessing, or moving a cluster munition; transporting or engaging in an activity related to the transport of a cluster munition; aiding, abetting, or counselling another person to use, develop, make, acquire, possess, move, import, or export a cluster munition; conspiring with another person to use, develop, make, acquire, possess, move, import, or export a cluster munition; and finally, receiving, comforting, or assisting another person to use, develop, make, acquire, possess, move, import or export a cluster munition.

Including such major loopholes radically undermines the practical effects of the convention.

Either Canada is for or against cluster munitions. By passing this legislation as it is currently formulated, the government appears to be engaged in what my former colleague, Bob Rae, called organized hypocrisy. We sign legislation that appears, but only appears, to ratify the convention, but we include major loopholes in fine print that mean that nothing would really change on the combat field, at least when we participate in joint operations with non-signatory countries, such as the United States, which is typical of most Canadian deployments.

The government replied that the realities of interoperability mean that we had no choice but to include these loopholes if we wished to continue participating in joint missions with the Americans. This is clearly not true. In fact, 20 NATO countries have signed this convention without including these kinds of loopholes in their ratifying legislation, and they continue to operate in joint missions with the United States.

Department of National Defence representatives noted that there is always recognition in a partnership such as NATO that each country has different rules, and there are no repercussions from those differences inside a coalition. In a case where a nation would not use a particular weapon, we would not eliminate them from the coalition. We would simply employ them in the coalition in such a way as to not cause them to violate a principle or a domestic law, which would have fit in our amendments.

Bill C-6 is also missing key positive obligations that are outlined in the convention, including stockpiling, destruction, transparency reports, working to universalize the convention and promote its norms, notifying allies of our convention obligations, and discouraging the use of cluster munitions. This ratification legislation does not adequately promote the stigmatization of the use of cluster bombs.

The government likes to talk a lot about how its foreign policy is based on principled stands and seems to imply that this is novel for Canadian governments. What is principled, though, about passing legislation that appears to ratify an international convention we signed onto but then including loopholes within that fine print? It is not the way we have proceeded in many treaties past.

Government Orders

• (2230)

Respectfully, I would suggest that Canada's previous leadership of banning land mines was a much better example of principled foreign policy. I very much regret that we are not able to improve the legislation significantly.

We would like to thank organizations such as Mines Action Canada and the Mennonite Central Committee that did all they could do to raise awareness about this issue. I would also like to thank the expert witnesses we heard in committee.

I am also very sorry for the thousands of people all over the world who have been injured or killed by these weapons, which we can all agree are the most devastating and most vicious weapons known to humankind.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about circumstances and so on.

First of all, I have to point out that it is an offence and remains an offence to request the use of cluster munitions. Canadians cannot request use of cluster munitions.

He talked about aiding and abetting. If a Canadian refuelling aircraft is refuelling an aircraft from the United States that may or may not be carrying cluster weapons—most likely not, but it turns out that it is—is the pilot or crew of the refuelling aircraft committing a crime?

If an air traffic controller directs an aircraft toward a target area, and of course that controller has no idea what that aircraft is carrying, but let us say for argument's sake it is carrying cluster munitions, is that air traffic controller now guilty of an offence?

There are many more circumstances that could be gone into. Those are just two examples. Does my colleague think those people have committed an offence or should be considered as having committed an offence?

• (2235)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, the concept of knowingly doing so is involved here, which is what we discussed at the foreign affairs committee.

Once again I would like to remind that member that it is directing or authorizing an activity that may involve the use, acquisition, possession, import, or export of a cluster munition. We are talking about expressly requesting the use of cluster munitions, which his examples do not include. Acquiring, possessing or moving a cluster munition itself. These are quite explicit.

I certainly believe that allowing this amendment to go through would have explored these issues and would have closed a loophole to address all the questions that the member is asking. That brings up a point. By accepting these amendments I feel that those questions would have been addressed. By asking these questions, I would like to think that he would like to close these loopholes himself.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right to point out that Bill C-6 is an attempt to undermine rather than ratify the convention.

I had the pleasure of working in the committee that studied Bill C-6. We heard from many witnesses, including Paul Hannon, the

executive director of Mines Action Canada, who had this to say on the bill:

Canada should have the best domestic legislation in the world. We need to make it clear that no Canadian will ever be involved with this weapon again but from our reading this legislation falls well short of those standards.

We also heard from other witnesses, including former Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser who said:

It is a pity the current Canadian Government, in relation to cluster munitions, does not provide any real lead to the world. Its approach is timid, inadequate and regressive.

Has my colleague been able to consult with stakeholders on this issue, and what is his reading of the stakeholder situation?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, many stakeholders brought up these concerns. Let us face it: a lot of the thoughts and testimony that we have brought to the House today have come from many of those witnesses.

The witnesses that my colleague mentioned, Mines Action Canada and the Mennonite Committee, have certainly been an important part of that. They have been very vocal in their opposition to some of these loopholes.

Other people who have written editorials have brought forward some of the things they talked about, such as removing the word “using” from clause 11(1)(c), not going far enough to eliminate the use of cluster bombs. One of the examples was that other nations that closed those loopholes engage in interoperability missions with other countries that are not signatories. In other words, if they can do it, so can we.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent address. The member spoke so clearly to the issues that I think all of us on the opposition benches at least, and I imagine some friends on the Conservative side in their heart, would like to see changed.

I am going to refer to a brief that came from Human Rights Watch and Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic, which made some of the same points. Their reading of this bill, as it is before us now, said that under this bill we may still be running, not only not meeting the convention's goals, but running “counter to, the convention's goals”.

They are concerned that the bill:

Permits assistance with cluster munition-related activities...in the course of joint military operations...;

Allows stockpiling of cluster munitions in and transit of them through Canadian territory;

Provides only a limited ban on transfer of cluster munitions; and

Fails explicitly to prohibit investment in the production of cluster munitions.

My question is for my hon. colleague. Given these failures, how does he believe Bill C-6 stands up to the promises and the commitments we have made in signing the convention in the first place?

• (2240)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her earlier speech when she spoke so passionately to this issue.

Government Orders

The witnesses we have seen speak passionately about things that are in the bill that are considered to be loopholes, which I mentioned earlier. They also speak to things not addressed, things that live up to the spirit of the treaty that was originally signed. For example, stockpile destruction, transparency reports, working to universalize the convention and promote its norms, notifying allies of its convention obligations, discouraging the use of cluster munitions.

There is a basic investment in the public realm as to what these bombs can do and how we need to eradicate them, and how we keep our governments in check to always make sure that we propose legislation that eliminates these destructive and unbearable munitions.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to contribute to the debate on Bill C-6, the prohibiting cluster munitions act, specifically clause 11.

In my previous life, I was very familiar with cluster munitions because it was my job. They used to form part of our war stock of weapons on the CF-104 and later on the CF-18. I instructed others on their tactical application of weapons effects, which were horrific. We never dropped the actual weapons, even in training, due to the residual hazard, and thank God we never had to drop them in wartime, but we were trained and prepared to do so. That was then.

Members of this House are well aware of the nature of cluster munitions and the kind of harm they can cause. We all know that they have terrible effects and that any unexploded remnants are a long-term threat to civilians seeking to rebuild their community after a conflict has ended.

These cluster bombs, as has been pointed out, can contain hundreds of small bomblets that are designed to cover a large area. The problem is, there is always a dud rate, or some number of bomblets that do not detonate on impact but remain armed and deadly. Sometimes they are harvested intentionally, and very carefully, and used in the production of improvised explosive devices. More often, they are simply left lying around for an unsuspecting person to accidentally detonate them, with catastrophic results.

As Canadians, we should all be committed to ridding the world of these weapons. As parliamentarians, we should all be committed to ensuring that the convention on cluster munitions is fully implemented as a step towards that ultimate goal. Bill C-6 was drafted carefully to reflect this commitment and to give effect to those obligations required by the convention within domestic Canadian legislation.

Bill C-6 would allow us to implement the convention while at the same time meet our broader defence needs. It would allow us to remain a strong and reliable ally and continue to contribute meaningfully on the international stage, both as a contributor and participant in joint and combined military operations, in the interest of international peace and security, and as a participant in the effort to rid the world of cluster munitions and their explosive remnants.

While Canada is ready to join the convention and renounce the direct use of cluster munitions, not all countries share our approach and may not join the convention any time soon. Some of them, of

course, are NATO allies, countries with whom we would likely enter into combined military operations in the foreseeable future.

All members of this House understand that Canada and the United States are close allies and that the Canadian Armed Forces have a long-standing tradition and practice of close co-operation with our American counterparts. This co-operation has been good for both countries, and it is important and necessary for our common security interests. It has also been in the interest of peace and security at the global level. We co-operate in training, we exchange personnel so that each of us can understand how the other's military forces are organized and commanded, and we co-operate in actual military operations.

The convention would require Canada itself not to make, possess, or directly use cluster munitions and to prosecute and punish Canadians who do. However, it would also allow us to continue to co-operate with our allies.

I believe that Canadian international security interests require that we continue to co-operate as closely in the future as we have in the past with our allies. I believe that the convention and this bill strike the right balance in this regard.

Clause 11 of Bill C-6 contains exclusions to the bill's prohibitions in order to provide legal protection to the Canadian Armed Forces and government employees, allowing them to perform a range of activities during military co-operation and operations that are undertaken with states that have not joined the convention. This is specifically permitted by article 21 of the convention.

Article 21 was purposefully included in the text at the request of a number of countries, including Canada. We are not alone in advocating for military co-operation. A number of other countries have had legitimate military interoperability concerns and shared Canada's concerns that it was necessary to preserve the ability of countries that were ratified to co-operate with countries that might choose not to ratify.

In Bill C-6, and in our defence and security policies, Canada is applying the provisions of the convention as negotiated and drafted. The government has always been clear about what these provisions require and transparent about how it intended to implement them.

Article 21 does not allow Canada itself to use, develop, produce, acquire, stockpile, or transfer cluster munitions or to expressly request their use when the choice of munitions used is within its exclusive control. All of these activities would be made offences in Canada. It would only allow individuals who participate in permitted forums of military co-operation involving Canada to do so without risk of criminal prosecution.

Government Orders

As the government has made clear, Canadian Armed Forces personnel would not be permitted to use cluster munitions, including when they are involved in military operations with allied forces or when deployed to allied military units. We have numerous Canadians on exchange with particularly American, but other NATO allies as well.

● (2245)

Bill C-6, as amended by the committee, would prohibit the direct use of cluster munitions by Canadian Armed Forces personnel in all circumstances. During committee hearings, we heard that the Chief of the Defence Staff has issued an interim directive prohibiting the use of these weapons in any Canadian Armed Forces operations and that another directive will be issued reflecting all of the requirements of Bill C-6, as ultimately adopted by Parliament, in addition to further restrictions relating to training and transport going beyond the requirements of the convention.

We were also told that all of these restrictions would be incorporated in the Canadian Armed Forces rules of engagement and would typically be communicated to allies when Canada enters into military co-operation activity with them, as one method of informing our allies of our obligations under the convention. They would be implemented at such time as the bill receives royal assent and would be legally binding for Canadian Armed Forces members under the military justice system.

The convention and Bill C-6 allow Canadian Armed Forces members to continue to ask for potentially life-saving military assistance from our allies, be they parties to the convention or not, without fear of being disciplined or put on trial for the policy decisions of these other states.

The amendment proposed by the hon. member opposite would remove the exclusion for Canadian Armed Forces personnel. This would have the effect not only of compromising Canadian security, but also of potentially subjecting our own soldiers to prosecution for activities that are not actually prohibited by the treaty itself.

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces have volunteered to serve their country and they have joined an honourable profession in which the directions of the organizations and the orders of commanding officers have the force of law. We have an obligation to ensure that companies and individuals in Canada do not have or use cluster munitions, but we need not, and we should not, enact criminal offences that could subject our own soldiers to liability for engaging in activities that the convention permits and that are essential to our own security and their safety.

Agreeing to renounce and dispose of our own cluster munitions sends a strong signal as to where Canada stands on this important issue, but so does the message that we respect the decisions of our friends and allies and that we will stand with them in the defence of international security come what may. We have carefully considered the balance between security and disarmament, both in the long process of negotiating the convention and in our own review of the proposed implementing legislation.

We all agree that the ultimate goal is to eliminate cluster munitions from armed conflict. The best way to do that is for Canada to ratify the convention.

My hon. colleague from the NDP quoted Paul Hannon, Executive Director at Mines Action Canada. I will also quote Mr. Hannon. He said that the government's decision to remove the one word, "using", was significant.

That was referred to by my colleague across the way as well. Mr. Hannon went on to say:

We were surprised to get any amendment and surprised that was the amendment we got. If they were only going to delete one word, "using" was the most important one.

It clarifies the fact that Canadian forces themselves can never use clusters, but it also means it will be more difficult for other countries to use them in joint ops when Canadians are involved.

We can interpret what other people say any way we like, I guess, but there seem to be at least some folks who are agreeing that what we are doing may not be what they would desire in their perfect world. However we are not operating in anybody's perfect world. Canada has gone a long way in this regard, as my colleague the parliamentary secretary for the minister of foreign affairs said. He talked about the mine clearing operations and so on. I have been to Afghanistan many times, and I have talked to the folks who are doing the mine clearing over there. They do tremendous work. This is an area that will take continued effort. It will go on for years and years. Yes, they are a terrible hazard and they do wreak terrible destruction, not just at the time of use.

I am not sure. I am having it checked, but I do not believe that the U.S. used any cluster munitions in their operations in Afghanistan. There were no Canadians killed by cluster munitions in Afghanistan, none. IEDs and so on are another issue.

The best way we can move forward on this is for Canada to ratify the convention with the measures of Bill C-6. I hope that members will look carefully at all the elements of the bill and will join me in supporting it.

● (2250)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would acknowledge the amendment that was made. We pushed and worked with the government over months, even years, I could add, because there was the first iteration from the Senate bill, and then this one. The Conservatives were stubbornly refusing to make any amendments at all, so I acknowledge that one amendment, that one word, but it is not enough. I will just cite the one part of the clause that is still here.

It says the following:

Section 6 does not prohibit a person who is subject to the Code of Service Discipline under any of paragraphs...

Then it refers to the National Defence Act. It continues:

...or combined military operations involving Canada and a state that is not a party to the Convention, from....

Then it talks about directing or authorizing an activity that may involve the use or acquisition of cluster munitions.

Therefore it is not up to the standard that we accepted for ourselves before.

Government Orders

Finally, before I give it to my colleague to answer, clause 11 still has problems on interoperability that could be undermining our adherence to the treaty. That is what we have to look at: whether there is a scenario in which we could be undermining adherence to the treaty. That is the problem. I would say that the member would know that it would be clear working with our allies that our obligation to adhere to a treaty, as to our own legislation, could be worked out with our allies to let them know that we must not be in theatre in any way, shape, or form—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

The hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, let me point out a couple of things that actually touch on reality. We talked about circumstances over which Canadians would have no control. Let me give one that actually happened in Afghanistan, that Canadian soldiers faced in the field not all that long ago.

A team of 30 Canadian soldiers was guarding a school for young girls and boys in Afghanistan, when they came under attack by the Taliban. They were outnumbered and out-gunned, and they called in air support to help them out. They had no idea what munitions the aircraft were going to be carrying, from the United States or from anywhere else. They had no clue. It is unlikely, but if they happened to be carrying cluster munitions and they were used, I would suggest that is not a crime on the part of the Canadian soldiers.

I ask my colleague across the way a question about air refuelling. We have a Canadian air refueller, and we had many of them operating in various conflicts, multinationally, with forces of other nations carrying weapons. Should we refuse to refuel an aircraft from the United States because it might be carrying cluster munitions?

There is example after example of Canadians having no control over what the other country is doing. If we follow that to the extreme, we would never operate with the United States in any region of conflict, ever. Maybe that is what my colleague would like; I do not know.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for Canadians watching tonight, I am sure they wonder what we are talking about here. We are talking about a treaty. The Conservatives are doing a half measure here, whereby they are saying we do not believe in cluster munitions but if they are happening we have to agree with them.

My colleague is well adapted to being in the military, and he says the Americans have not used them and are not planning on using them. Can he explain what other NATO countries are doing? Compared to us, are all the other NATO countries in the same position as we are? What do they think of our treaty? How do they stand when they are going to go into a theatre of war, and how are they going to treat the cluster munitions? How are they going to deal with this? Do we look as if we are kind of playing a half measure, and is that what Canadians think we are doing here, that we are really not standing against these terrible bombs that are being produced and being used in a theatre of war?

● (2255)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, let me just add a couple of things from Afghanistan.

There were British forces, Danish forces, Netherlands forces, and others who were interoperating with the Americans just as we were. Those could have been British, Danish, or Dutch soldiers guarding the school in Afghanistan. The same conditions and considerations would apply. If they accepted help from an American F-16 that happened to be carrying cluster munitions, they are not going to charge their soldiers for being saved by an ally. That is ludicrous. Nobody condones or wants to continue the use of cluster munitions. However, at the same time, we can do what we did.

By the way, during negotiations we were not the only country to express the need to protect interoperability. Australia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.K. all had the same concerns as we do. It is nice to be able to sit in here and be pure, and that is what we should be to the maximum extent possible, but there is a real world out there where things are not pure, and we are operating against people on the other side who are definitely not pure. It does not mean we go down to their level, but it means we have to protect ourselves as well, and we have to respect countries like the United States that have far greater responsibilities in the world than we do.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this evening we are considering a bill sponsored by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I have a few preliminary remarks to make before commenting specifically on it.

This week, we have been sitting late into the evening to debate in haste bills that the Conservative government wants to push through. However, this bill was introduced in the House on December 6, 2012. The Conservatives then took six months to bring it to the debate stage. Once that was done, they imposed time allocation on us to limit debate, and now they have started up again with the same bill one year later.

The Conservatives often accuse us of hypocrisy and wanting to delay legislation, but it is they who constantly diminish democracy by forcing Parliament's hand. I would point out that we are on our 64th time allocation motion and the Conservatives have a majority. They therefore control the agenda.

In these circumstances, they have convened a botched debate on a bill as debatable as Bill C-6. Here we see all the consideration the Conservatives have for world affairs: they legislate hastily late at night before thinned ranks.

Government Orders

It is as though regulating the production and purchase of cluster munitions did not merit having the Conservatives devote a little more time to it. The reason for this haste is obvious: they have no desire to give Canadians any way of realizing that the bill before us serves no other purpose than to prevent the application of the convention is supposed to implement.

This legislative step backward will have definite consequences that everyone here must know in his or her soul and conscience before approving the principle of it. I can state right away that this backtracking from our desire to regulate cluster munitions will mean death, suffering and blood.

The Conservative members who speak after me will naturally say I am exaggerating. They will pretend they want to pass the bill precisely in order to prevent my prediction from coming true. However, we members of the NDP do not hide behind empty words. We do not call deregulation reform or a step backward progress. We look at the reality head-on.

I see the reality of cluster munitions and conventional weapons every time I visit the two Royal Canadian Legions in my riding. I encounter that reality every Remembrance Day. It is written in every wound of every veteran who lost an arm, a leg or a hand in combat. The reality of cluster munitions is terribly cruel.

These bombs were used for the first time during World War II. Since then, they have been used on all battlefields, including the most recent ones in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. These weapons were designed to disperse explosive submunitions over a small area.

Their effect is devastating. No one can escape. They cause indiscriminate harm to anyone and anything in their area. Their failure rate makes cluster munitions particularly dangerous for civilians: 30% do not explode when they hit the ground. They wait patiently for their victims, who continue to be maimed or killed years and even decades after the war has ended.

It is astounding that 98% of the victims of cluster munitions are civilians and 40% of them are children, a proportion that is heart-stopping. In addition to the wounds they cause, cluster munitions contaminate arable land, kill livestock and destroy shelters, permanently impeding economic recovery and development.

In keeping with its humanitarian tradition and its initiatives in terms of disarmament and conventional arms control, Canada signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008. In doing so, it made a commitment not to develop, produce, acquire, sell, stockpile, retain or transfer cluster munitions. By signing the convention, Canada also made a commitment to destroy all cluster munitions in its possession within eight years.

Canada's signing of the convention committed it to providing assistance to the victims of cluster munitions and the other states parties to the convention. It was also to take all the necessary legislative measures to have the text adopted in its domestic law, which is why we are here this evening. At the time, we had underlined the signing of the convention as progress in keeping with Canada's humanitarian tradition and duty.

● (2300)

If Bill C-6 were nothing but that, we would pass it with no hesitation. However, as it always does, the Conservative government has distorted the spirit of the law. The text it has put before us today reneges on the commitment it made yesterday. As always happens with the Conservatives, the devil is in the details. The details in this text are terrible. They include a loophole in the ban on using cluster munitions. The key word is "interoperability". By including this word in the bill, even though we have signed the ban on cluster munitions, we could use them anyway. This means that the convention that we signed is undermined by the government's action.

The testimony of those who negotiated the convention supports this view. The lead negotiator, Earl Turcotte, said in writing about this bill that "the proposed Canadian legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the convention, to date". Former Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser said it was "a pity the current Canadian government, in relation to cluster munitions, does not provide any real lead to the world. Its approach is timid, inadequate and regressive".

Once again, Canada is content to be at the bottom of the class. That makes me sad for my country. However, experts, international figures and NDP members are not the only ones who are saying that this is a bad bill. On June 11, the defence minister at that time acknowledged that this was true. He said that the bill was not perfect and that it should be amended. It still has enormous deficiencies. It must be reviewed before it can be passed. I sincerely hope this will convince the Conservative members to listen for once to those who do not share their opinion rather than persisting in blindly passing anything and everything.

As for me, given the suffering of the victims of these abominable weapons, the destruction they cause and my duty toward humanity, I will refuse to support this bill, which, in its present form, contradicts and undermines the international treaty that it is supposed to implement and ratify.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the great philosopher Edmund Burke once said, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing".

I heard the member for Edmonton say that we do not live in a perfect world and that we need to accept that these bombs may harm children and civilian members of society. He mentioned the war in Afghanistan, which is increasingly becoming part of our history instead of part of our future.

I want to ask my colleague a question: looking to the future, would it not be a better idea to ban these tools of war?

● (2305)

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We are quite obviously in favour of a complete and total ban on cluster munitions. If we consider wars in history and the very recent war in Afghanistan, they should serve as a reminder that we can truly build a peaceful future for our children. We will not move in that direction by acting in this manner and passing bills such as Bill C-6.

Government Orders

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague on her speech.

Of course, we must go ahead with the Convention on Cluster Munitions. However, we must not distort what it represents. Unfortunately, the Conservative government is removing the very spirit of the convention.

Once again, Canada is lagging behind on the international level. The NDP wants Canada to be a world leader with regard to environmental agreements and agreements that aim at ensuring peace and justice throughout the world. In this regard, 113 countries have already signed the convention and 84 have ratified it. What a number of countries deplore is that we are now undermining the convention to the point where it is being distorted. We are becoming one of the worst countries signing the convention, and the convention no longer means anything.

What does my hon. colleague think about the elements distorting the convention, such as clause 11, which opens the door to further use of cluster munitions, rather than protecting the victims, who are often civilians, as my colleague so rightly said?

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. It is very clear that signing the convention was necessary and important. At that time, we took a step in the right direction.

Today, we want to ratify the convention by means of Bill C-6. My colleague mentioned clause 11. In this regard, the fact that our soldiers will themselves be complicit one way or another in using cluster munitions is a notable and disastrous step backwards. It will do nothing to reduce the number of deaths or to prevent children from playing with cluster munitions and being killed, maimed or wounded.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in this House again.

Does my colleague believe it is possible to improve Bill C-6? Does she agree that we now have an opportunity to improve it?

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

I think that improving the bill means removing clause 11, purely and simply. If we really want to respect the spirit and the letter of the convention, that is what we have to do. We still have an opportunity to do it, and I encourage the government to take this path.

• (2310)

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It is an important bill that will significantly impact future international conflicts and Canada's role in them.

My colleagues have already rightly pointed out that the bill contains some major flaws, unfortunately. If it is passed in its present form, we will have signed the convention in invisible ink, because we will in fact not be adhering to the letter of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. In many parts of the world, the Conservative bill to implement the convention is considered to be the weakest one and, quite honestly, the worst one.

The bill is very problematic, which is why it is essential that we amend it. As my colleagues have already stated, we will only be able to support it if it is amended. As it currently stands, the bill undermines the spirit in which the convention was drafted as well as its intent, namely the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. Tragically, those who have no stake in conflicts, civilians, far too often become the unfortunate victims of these dangerous weapons.

We have worked very hard with Canadian and international civil society groups to convince the government to ban the use of cluster munitions by Canadian soldiers. The bill is still riddled with several dangerous and unnecessary legal gaps. These would allow Canadian soldiers to come into contact with highly dangerous and lethal cluster munitions and even use them. Their projectiles can unfortunately hit civilian populations.

The NDP will keep pressuring the Conservatives to amend this bill, so that Canada can at least be recognized as a humanitarian country, a humanist one, and a leader when it comes to promoting peace and protecting civilians.

Canada used to have a better reputation on the international stage. Recently, under the Conservative government, we have lost opportunities to maintain and even enhance our country's reputation. For example, Canada was the first and only country to withdraw from the Kyoto protocol. We backed away from our responsibility to protect our environment and our commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. All this tarnishes our reputation. Many experts and witnesses have said that of all bills created by the signatories to the convention, Canada's is the weakest.

I hope that the Conservatives will have the diligence and open-mindedness to accept the amendments put forward in good faith, so that the convention can be ratified. Canada will then be party to a convention aimed at improving the well-being of civilians and children, who are often victims of cluster munitions.

• (2315)

Unfortunately, Canada managed to negotiate, in the final text of the convention, the inclusion of an article allowing for ongoing military interoperability with states not party to the convention. That is a weakness.

What is worse is that Bill C-6 is not only about this article on interoperability. The main problem lies with clause 11, which proposes a list of very vague exceptions. In its original form, clause 11 allowed Canadian soldiers to use, obtain, possess or transport cluster munitions in the course of joint operations with a state that is not a party to the convention, and to request that they be used by the armed forces of another country.

Obviously, such a provision does not respect the spirit of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Clause 11 makes it virtually impossible for the NDP to support the bill. That is why I am saying amendments will be required. The amendments that the NDP and other parties will propose will have to be accepted to bring the bill back on the right track and respect this very important convention.

Government Orders

During a meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, the NDP gave its support to Canadian and foreign civil organizations calling for the bill to be amended. Unfortunately, this legislation has other flaws, but that is the main one.

We want to fully support the development of a treaty to ban cluster munitions. We want a treaty to implement such a ban, as stated in the convention. However, this bill does not fully implement the convention.

The NDP will not support the bill as it stands. In committee, we will work very hard with civil society groups to ensure that the amendments, which are logical and accepted by civil society and international groups, are also accepted by the Conservatives. We will then be able to support the bill. We must sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions because it is good and it goes in the right direction. However, the bill must also go in the same direction.

At this time, the best thing would be for the Conservatives to accept our proposed amendment to completely delete clause 11. I think this would allow us to have a perfect bill.

Earl Turcotte, former senior coordinator for the mine action program for Afghanistan at DFAIT, was the head of the Canadian delegation that negotiated the convention. He said:

In my opinion, the proposed Canadian legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, to date.

He is a very significant figure in the negotiations, and he is saying that the proposed legislation is the worst. It does not satisfy Canada's obligations with respect to international humanitarian law. It does not protect vulnerable civilians in war-torn countries. In addition, it betrays the trust of the countries that negotiated the treaty in good faith. It also falls short of Canadians' expectations.

I could quote many other witnesses who made similar comments. The bill does not hold up and it does not comply with the convention. I am not the one saying it, the experts are. It absolutely needs to be amended.

● (2320)

I am reaching out to the Conservatives, and I hope that they will be open to amending this bill so that it honours the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague pointed out in his speech, the issue of cluster munitions is particularly tragic because the victims are often women and children. That is what we heard in committee when we were studying this bill.

My colleague also commented on the fact that the government has become the laughingstock of the international community when it comes to cluster munitions and the contents of Bill C-6.

Can my colleague talk about why clause 11 is so problematic? Does he think, like I do, that this clause should be taken out?

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my honourable colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, who is doing an excellent job. I believe that she sat on the committee and I am sure that she listened carefully to the experts, who clearly said that the bill in its current form does not comply with the convention.

To point out how dangerous these weapons are, I will repeat that 98% of the injuries caused by these cluster munitions were inflicted on civilians. That clearly shows why these weapons must be banned. These weapons are not really useful in war, but represent instead a danger to civilians, children, women and non-combatants.

That is why clause 11 is so dangerous. It allows us to shirk our obligation to not use these cluster munitions. We are saying that we will sign the convention, but that we will use these weapons anyway. We are not being honest if we sign the convention and keep clause 11.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the NDP always tries to work with the government in order to improve legislation. We have worked with groups in civil society to convince the government to come up with a common sense bill that prohibits Canadian soldiers from using cluster munitions.

Can my colleague explain why we cannot support this bill if we leave legal voids? It is not enough to leave these legal voids; we must ban these bombs outright.

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Vaudreuil—Soulanges for his question and excellent work.

It is not acceptable for us to sign a convention and make a commitment to the international community and then do the opposite when that community is not looking. There is a sort of legal loophole in this bill. There are holes everywhere. The bill is a sieve. It would enable Canadian soldiers to use cluster munitions in almost every situation, even though our country signed the convention.

That is why this bill needs to prohibit the use of cluster munitions. Ninety-eight percent of all injuries from cluster munitions are suffered by civilians. That number speaks for itself. It makes no sense from a humanitarian and peace-building perspective to continue using cluster munitions. We must take action.

We claim to want to bring peace to other countries. We sent our blue berets and other delegations to Afghanistan and other places all over the world to bring peace. We cannot use these cluster munitions and kill civilians. That makes no sense. That is not in line with Canada's humanistic reputation.

● (2325)

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to present a new approach to talking about cluster munitions. I have heard a lot about this topic, but what I want to talk about is a bit new. The problem with cluster munitions is that they take human judgment out of a military operation.

I want to use some examples from the Second World War. Imagine a pilot who received information about the location of tents in enemy territory. He cannot wait to bomb those tents. He gets there and sees that on these tents is a white circle with a red cross on it. He stops the attack. He will not bomb a field hospital.

Government Orders

That is not the case with cluster munitions. The pilot does not even see the area. He sends a missile to attack an area—not a very specific target, not a tent. He bombs an area. That is the problem. A pilot cannot use judgment and stop an attack. The cluster munition decides who will die and who will not.

A sapper, an engineer, sets up a minefield. It is mapped out. He indicates on a map where the minefield is located, and he indicates what kind of mines were used and where they are placed. There are documents that support what I am saying. Every military manual will say that this is how to create a minefield. A well-placed minefield protects the sapper, but it also protects his troops, showing them they should not walk in that area. It prevents civilians from walking into the area by accident. It is very specific.

When a cluster munition explodes, it does not discriminate. It is left to chance. A huge area is haphazardly mined. Anyone can trip those mines. That is the problem with cluster munitions. The military no longer controls the placement and structure of a minefield.

A gunner attacks an enemy battery that is in a village, or near a village. What does the gunner do? He focuses his first shots on isolated targets before attacking the village, which gives civilians time to find shelter. A cluster munition does the exact opposite. It attacks the entire area at the same time, without warning. Cluster munitions increase the number of civilian victims, mostly because they are indiscriminate. Unlike humans, who can reason, machines are indiscriminate.

We are told to be careful with cluster munitions, because even though we may not use them, our allies might. However, when we stopped using poison gas, we stopped using it altogether. We did not say that our soldiers could not use poison gas but that we would let the Americans use it on our behalf. We did not say that if we ever needed support and if, by chance, poison gas was used, it would not be our fault. Poison gas is entirely prohibited. Cluster munitions are not subject to that same rule.

The biggest problem is that even if we ourselves do not use cluster bombs, we use their delivery systems. One of the biggest is the F-35. Our government wants to buy F-35s. An F-35 without cluster bombs is like a shotgun without bullets. Therein lies the contradiction.

● (2330)

How can we employ technology that is designed for the use of cluster bombs? That is what makes this situation so hypocritical. This is just like what happened with nuclear warheads.

Canada signed an international protocol prohibiting it from having nuclear weapons. What did Diefenbaker's Conservative government do? It said it wanted to use American F-101 Voodoo fighter jets and huge Bomarc anti-aircraft missiles. Those missiles are effective only if equipped with nuclear warheads. Canada might not have any nuclear warheads, but it would allow American technicians to bring nuclear warheads to Canadian military bases. If things started going badly, those American technicians could put nuclear warheads on Canadian planes and Canadian missiles. In theory, we signed a protocol prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons.

The very same thing is happening now. The government puts on a show of being virtuous, but behind the scenes, it is finding ways to use these weapons. This kind of approach is dishonourable. If we do

not want to use cluster munitions or be allied with countries that use cluster munitions, the simple answer is peace. We just do not participate in armed conflict with people who use these weapons. If we do so, we become accomplices.

One day we will have to face that fact. Just because the Americans go to war does not mean we have to be idiots and join them simply because the Conservatives think it is exciting.

It is not exciting to see Canadian soldiers die. It is not exciting for members of the Canadian Armed Forces to have to kill people. Even less acceptable is when Canadian soldiers participate in military operations whose targets are primarily civilians. Peace is not built with weapons, but unfortunately, that is something we forget too often here.

Obviously, the NDP opposes Bill C-6, which allows for sly ways to use these unacceptable weapons. We want Canada to sign on fully to an agreement that has already been signed by several countries. That is what we want, and it is not unreasonable. Many countries that are U.S. allies have already done it. Being a U.S. ally does not necessarily mean being their underlings or their servants and finding that exciting. I will leave that to the government people.

So, naturally, the NDP believes that clause 11 has to go.

[English]

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was in the lobby and I caught part of what my colleague was saying.

I will be on Juno Beach on June 6 next week, where thousands of Canadians apparently died like idiots. I have personally lost 35 friends to violent death in the service in flying accidents. They apparently died like idiots. There were 158 brave Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan who apparently died like idiots. We have had millions of Canadians who served in the cause of freedom, apparently like idiots. With those kinds of comments, I do not know whether to laugh or cry.

It makes me proud in a perverse kind of way that we can have a Parliament in a country where people can make comments like that, which are frankly beyond the pale. As well-meaning as I am sure they are, there are references, implications, or inferences to Canadians who served in uniform, any Canadians who fought for freedom of our country and countries that we have supported throughout our history over the last almost 150 years.

On the one hand, I am proud that we have a country where we are allowed to stand in this place and say such, frankly, idiotic things. On the other hand, it makes me sad that we have Canadians who have so little appreciation of what men and women in uniform have done for our country and for other countries throughout our history. I am extremely proud of those people. I am extremely proud of all those idiots, and I am extremely proud to have been one of those idiots.

Government Orders

● (2335)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, here is the perfect example of an idiot. Dying for one's country and dying for freedom is one thing. Dying to allow imbeciles to say that they are allies of the Americans is another. I think it is sad that this individual considers himself a defender of our veterans. If he were truly a defender of Canadian veterans, then he would stop persecuting them and cutting their medical and other services. That would not be idiotic.

What we need here is to defend our country and our freedoms, not those of another and certainly not by using solutions that attack civilians.

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understand it is late and the member is emotional and tired, but he should apologize to my colleague for what he called him with regard to the word "idiot". That is not appropriate parliamentary language and he should withdraw it and apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I thank the hon. member for Prince Albert for his intervention. I would remind all hon. members that the use of this kind of language specifically to individual members, as is referenced in section 18 of the Standing Orders, invariably leads to the kind of discourse that we do not abide by in the House. We realize that emotions can get high on either side.

I recognize the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin made his comments in French and I may want to go back to hear exactly what was said and the context of how it was said.

One of the standard measures that we use for unparliamentary language is when it creates disorder. Clearly, in the context that the comment was offered in this case, it has created a certain amount of emotional response from the other side.

I wonder if the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin might wish to address the point.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for this House and especially for you—your job is not easy and I believe we must support you at all times. I also think that my comments crossed the line.

I think the hon. member for Edmonton Centre deserves an apology and I apologize to him.

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, incongruent with the way we handled the situation with the land mine treaty, I wonder if my colleague could comment on the fact that the loopholes within Bill C-6 are certainly not congruent with the way it used to be. Would he like to comment on that, plus the fact that there are other nations that seem to have closed these loopholes without us taking part in it in order to ratify this treaty?

● (2340)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, the entire international community is trying to prevent the use of certain weapons: land mines, especially plastic ones that are undetectable and can be confused with toys; poison gas; and nuclear weapons. The international community is trying to limit those.

When we limit the use of a weapon, we do so totally and irrevocably. Cluster munitions are generally recognized for being dangerous and for unacceptably targeting civilian populations, but yet they are given a pass. That is what is unacceptable about this bill. Bill C-6 allows another exception. We publicly say that we are against these cluster munitions, but then we turn around and allow them to be used. That is precisely what the Conservatives did with the use of nuclear weapons, the Bomarc missiles and the Voodoo fighter jets.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the House this evening, despite the late hour. I would like to speak to Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

It is important to me to speak to this bill because I have a lot of reservations about its content. I plan to vote against Bill C-6 in its current form because it contradicts and undermines the international treaty it is meant to implement.

[English]

Here is some background on the horrific effects that cluster munitions can have on civilians. Essentially cluster munitions are a form of air-dropped or ground-launched explosive weapons that release or eject smaller submunitions. The submunitions can be as small as a D size battery or a tennis ball.

The reason why these submunitions have such horrific effects is that their victims tend to be women and children. They tend to be civilians in a war zone or in a war situation. Moreover, unexploded submunitions essentially become landmines that can have devastating impacts on civilians many years after a conflict has ended. We have heard testimony from witnesses in committee about the devastating effects that cluster munitions can have on civilian populations.

Canada has participated actively in what was known as the Oslo process to produce a convention to ban the use of cluster munitions. The Oslo process came on the heels of the successes of the Ottawa treaty to ban landmines.

Despite a strong opposition from the majority of participating states and non-governmental organizations, Canada has succeeded in negotiating into the final text of the convention an article that explicitly allows for continued military interoperability with non-party states. Bill C-6 goes beyond even the interoperability allowance in the convention. The main problems with Bill C-6, as my colleagues before me have mentioned, lie in clause 11, which is the most controversial part of the bill and which establishes an extremely broad list of exceptions.

Government Orders

[Translation]

In its original form, section 11 allowed Canadian soldiers to use, acquire, possess or move cluster munitions when participating in combined military operations involving a state that is not a party to the convention, and to request the use of a cluster munition by another state's armed forces.

I had the pleasure of being a member of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, which studied Bill C-6. I am proud to be part of the NDP team and to have worked with our foreign affairs critic, my colleague from Ottawa Centre, in supporting civilian organizations in Canada and abroad and in calling for amendments to the bill.

We talked to civilian organizations and worked with committee members. My colleague from Ottawa Centre worked with the government, hoping he could persuade it to expressly prohibit Canadian soldiers from using cluster munitions. Unfortunately, the bill does not go far enough.

If Bill C-6 is not amended, Canada's commitment to the fight against cluster munitions will be very shallow. In fact, in its current form, this bill is the least restrictive of all bills passed by signatory states thus far.

Why is the bill problematic? It is problematic because it creates a dangerous precedent. In fact, it could even be detrimental to the convention internationally, in that the opt-outs and exceptions it contains could be invoked as precedents by other countries.

● (2345)

The Government of Canada is not taking the lead. Instead it is attempting to undermine international initiatives to ban the use of cluster munitions.

I would like to share some of the comments heard in committee. The witnesses are very critical and very clear on the government's position.

Malcolm Fraser, a former Australian prime minister said:

It is a pity the current Canadian government, in relation to cluster munitions, does not provide any real lead to the world. Its approach is timid, inadequate and regressive.

I must also mention that I have never been so ashamed about the government's position on international commitments as when I went to Durban a few years ago when the government withdrew from the Kyoto protocol. That is another example of how the government operates and negotiates. It is acting in bad faith towards the international community.

Unfortunately, that is the Conservative government's way of doing things. Consequently, we have become the laughing stock of the international community.

[English]

I would like to read some more testimony into the record, and this comes from Paul Hannon, executive director of Mines Action Canada. He said:

Canada should have the best domestic legislation in the world. We need to make it clear that no Canadian will ever be involved with this weapon again but from our reading this legislation falls well short of those standards.

Earl Turcotte, who is a former senior coordinator for mine action at DFAIT and was also the head of the Canadian delegation to negotiate the convention, said the following:

...the proposed legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the convention, to date. It fails to fulfill Canada's obligations under international humanitarian law; it fails to protect vulnerable civilians in war-ravaged countries around the world; it betrays the trust of sister states who negotiated this treaty in good faith, and it fails Canadians who expect far better from our nation.

The important thing to stress is the issue of trust and the very real issue that the Conservative government is slowly eroding the trust that our international partners have in our ability and our willingness to support things like human rights and climate change negotiations internationally.

The Conservative government has also fallen short in other areas. Just today in the House of Commons during question period I was able to question the Conservative government on the signing of the UN Arms Trade Treaty. The government has refused to join all of our NATO allies in signing the UN Arms Trade Treaty and has loosened restrictions on arms exports.

I believe that Canadians expect better from the Canadian government. Canadians expect the government to play a leadership role and to strengthen the convention rather than propose measures such as Bill C-6 that undermine the principles of the convention.

I would like to repeat that we are opposed to the bill as presented and, although we were able to obtain one amendment during committee that the Conservatives worked together with us to implement, it is an insufficient amendment to allow us to support the bill.

I believe without question that clause 11 needs to be eliminated from the bill in order to obtain my support and in order to obtain the support of my party. The NDP and our critic have proposed to delete the clause from the bill before it passes report stage.

● (2350)

Of course, we all decry the horrific effects of cluster munitions, but when it comes to real action, to strengthening our position on the international stage, and to reinforcing human rights around the world, I would invite all of my colleagues in this House to join with me in calling for clause 11 to be deleted from Bill C-6.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my honourable colleague for her excellent speech.

She gave a good explanation of why we cannot support the bill in its current form. That is why the Conservatives must keep an open mind. They must understand that these amendments would ensure that the convention protects the people to whom these munitions pose a threat, that is civilians. I would like to point out that civilians suffer 98% of all injuries caused by cluster munitions. Women, children and people who have nothing to do with the conflict, but who unfortunately are caught in the crossfire, are the victims of these cluster munitions. Therefore, it is very important for Canada's reputation that this bill ban the use of these munitions by Canadian soldiers.

Does my colleague believe, as I do, that it is vital that we remove clause 11 to have this bill reflect the Convention on Cluster Munitions?

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, I agree. We cannot accept this bill unless clause 11 is removed. I quoted several witnesses who appeared before the committee in support of our position. The Canadian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross stated that clause 11 would authorize activities undermining the purpose of the CCM and would contribute to the continued use of cluster munitions instead of bringing about their elimination.

To me, that speaks volumes. The Canadian Red Cross believes that Bill C-6 will contribute to the continued use of cluster munitions. That is certainly not what the House intends. I think that all MPs should work to eliminate the use of cluster bombs given their devastating impact on women, children and innocent people. We have to stop using these weapons as soon as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just have a quick question.

One of the things we noted missing in Bill C-6 are obligations that are outlined in the convention. Not thoroughly addressed are obligations including stockpile destruction, transparency reports, working to universalize the convention and promote its norms, notifying allies of convention obligations, and discouraging the use of cluster munitions.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would comment on those glaring omissions.

• (2355)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, the committee looked at other ways to improve this bill. We talked about prohibiting investment in companies that produce cluster bombs. Other countries have done that. Civil society organizations told us that we had to get rid of clause 11. I have to emphasize how big a problem this clause is. I know we can do something else. Some countries have gone even further to eliminate the use of cluster bombs.

The essential thing now is for all members of the House to come together to eliminate clause 11 from Bill C-6.

Mr. Tarik Brahmī (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will not rehash everything my colleagues have said about the fact that clause 11 is not necessary. In truth, not only is it not necessary, but it distorts the very spirit of this bill, which has a certain logic in the context of a convention.

This reminds me of the conversations we had about Bill S-9 at the time, on the convention on nuclear material and everything related to that.

I am not going to repeat my colleague's arguments. Instead I would like to quote some of the things that were said in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development during the studies. Take for example the rather interesting testimony of General Natynczyk:

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If we had to enforce article 21 of the convention, the exceptions listed in clause 11 of Bill C-6 would protect our men and women in uniform against prosecution, because they would have simply been carrying out their military duties.

We can understand the government's reluctance, relayed by General Natynczyk, who, I would remind the House, was the Chief of the Defence Staff until a few years ago. There is the fear that one day our soldiers will be faced with the prospect of having to explain why they took part in the use of cluster munitions.

That just shows to what extent Canada should be taking a leadership position in defending the rights of the most vulnerable. We know that these weapons in particular attack mainly civilians and children. It was General Natynczyk who pointed that out to us at that same committee meeting:

I spent my time in Bosnia and Croatia in 1994-95 and I saw the indiscriminate effects of landmines on civilians tilling their fields, children playing near schools, our own Canadian men and women and allied United Nations soldiers who attempted to bring peace and security to those troubled countries.

There is a contradiction in General Natynczyk's testimony. On the one hand he said he witnessed the catastrophic consequences for children and civilians but, on the other hand, he supports clause 11 because our serving men and women would never have to account for using these terrible weapons, which are totally and utterly senseless because they target primarily civilians and children.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (2400)

[*Translation*]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise, even at this time of night, to speak about an issue affecting all Canadians, namely the price of gasoline at the pump, which is far too high.

Each of us has seen gas stations on different streets in the same city and noticed how prices are different from one gas station to the next, and from one city to the next, so much so that sometimes a detour is well worth it. We do not understand why gas can cost a few cents a litre less at a gas station than at another one. There are even websites that indicate where gas is least expensive.

All these gas price variations at the pump are due to mismanagement. It is high time the federal government took action to put an end to these price variations. It is time to appoint an ombudsman to protect consumers from gas price variations and to strengthen Industry Canada's rules on collusion.

The NDP believes the federal government has a responsibility regarding the price of gas, which is once again reaching very high levels, as we have seen over the past few weeks.

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The government can and must take meaningful action to counter these abusive price hikes. It is high time we stopped getting gouged at the pumps. We have to fill up every week. It is time to put an end to these hikes. People do not understand why the price of gas keeps going up when the price of oil does not change. At nearly \$1.50 a litre in many cities in Quebec, including Quebec City, people are saying that they are paying too much. They are right.

I am calling on the Conservative government to follow the NDP's recommendations and create an ombudsman position to monitor gas prices and receive the growing number of complaints from drivers about this. Of course, that would allow us to put more pressure on the Competition Bureau, ensuring that there is more vigorous, aggressive follow-up.

The NDP also suggests that we strengthen Industry Canada's rules, to more effectively combat collusion among oil companies. The existing rules need to be more vigorously applied. It is unacceptable that the Competition Bureau's collusion cases result in sentences to be served in the community or in fines that rarely exceed \$10,000. We are talking about collusion here. I think we need to be a lot tougher.

The federal government continues to subsidize the big oil companies and has significantly reduced their taxes in recent years. Meanwhile, ordinary Canadians, the consumers and taxpayers, are being relentlessly gouged at the pumps, which is appalling. Canadians are being hit with a double whammy, because their taxes are being used to subsidize the Conservatives' gifts to the oil companies. That is essentially what is going on.

• (2405)

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot say how excited I am to be here tonight at five minutes after midnight to respond to comments made earlier by the hon. member for Québec regarding gasoline prices.

Let me begin by saying that this government understands the importance of gasoline, both to Canadians' everyday lives and to the Canadian economy. Canadians work hard to make ends meet and expect their government to have their interests front of mind. That is why our government has taken action in light of rising energy and commodity prices by making retailers more accountable for the accuracy of their gas-pump scales and other measuring devices.

Specifically, we have passed the Fairness at the Pumps Act. It is designed to protect consumers from inaccurate measurement at the pumps by introducing mandatory inspection requirements.

We also made substantial amendments to the Competition Act in 2009 that strengthened the powers of the Commissioner of Competition to take action against anti-competitive behaviour, including price fixing. The new provisions make it illegal for competitors to conspire, agree, or arrange to fix prices, or restrict output of a product. They also increase the penalties upon conviction, including jail terms of up to 14 years, fines of up to \$25 million, or a combination of both.

Enforcing the law in order to protect consumers and competition is the Competition Bureau's mandate. When the bureau finds

evidence of behaviour that violates the Competition Act, it does not hesitate to take action to protect competition and consumers. We saw evidence of this when a gasoline price-fixing cartel was charged in Quebec in 2008, 2010, and again in 2012.

In June 2008, following a Competition Bureau investigation, 13 individuals and 11 companies were charged with fixing the price of gasoline at the pump in Victoriaville, Thetford Mines, Magog, and Sherbrooke. In July 2010, an additional 25 individuals and 3 companies were charged with fixing the price of gasoline at the pump in the same four local markets. Most recently, in September 2012, one additional individual and company were charged with fixing the price of gasoline in three of these markets. A total of 39 individuals and 15 companies are accused in this case. To date, 33 individuals and 7 companies have pleaded guilty. The resulting fines totalled over \$3 million and six individuals have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment totalling 54 months.

In Ontario, charges of fixing the retail price of gasoline have resulted in four guilty pleas and the resulting fines have totalled over \$2.5 million.

I would like to remind the hon. member that contrary to what some people may think, the federal government does not control the price of most goods and services sold in Canada, including gasoline. With the exception of a national emergency, only the provinces have the authority to regulate gasoline prices. That is why we will use the tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers are truly and effectively protected against these types of illegal activities. We will continue to stand up for consumers in this and all sectors of our economy.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I think there is still something to be done.

According to Desjardins, the lack of competition in Quebec's gasoline market can drive prices up for motorists, but this still does not explain the widening gap between prices at the pump and the price of oil.

To quote a few figures, in 2008, the price of a barrel of oil was roughly \$140 U.S. At the time, fear of a global shortage had pushed prices up. The same barrel today trades at the much lower price of \$107 U.S. or thereabouts. Gas prices, however, keep skyrocketing.

This gap in prices is plain for all to see, yet it remains unexplained. Consumers wonder why prices at the pump keep rising. We cannot understand why they keep rising while the price of a barrel remains relatively steady.

I believe there is cause to establish an ombudsman mandated to more closely oversee the Competition Bureau and the enforcement of its rules. That is what the NDP is calling for.

I would like to hear the member's comments on the issue.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, this government will continue to provide an economic climate that allows Canadian businesses to prosper. Furthermore, this government has acted to protect consumers at the pumps. We reduced the GST by 2%, we passed the Fairness at the Pumps Act, and we strengthened the powers of the Commissioner of Competition through substantial amendments to the Competition Act that make it illegal for competitors to conspire, arrange, or agree to fix prices, allocate customers, or restrict output of a product.

To further protect Canadians from price gouging, we increased Competition Act penalties upon conviction to jail terms of up to 14 years, fines of up to \$25 million, or a combination of both. We have

worked to protect consumers against anti-competitive behaviour, and the Competition Bureau will continue to enforce these measures whenever and wherever it finds evidence of behaviour that contravenes the Competition Act.

● (2410)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:10 a.m.)

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