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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 25, 2015

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 25, 2015

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. member for Oshawa.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

2015 SCOTTIES TOURNAMENT OF HEARTS

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to congratulate Jennifer Jones, Jill Officer, Kaitlyn Lawes, Dawn McEwan, Jennifer Clark-Rouire, and coach Wendy Morgan on their successful drive to five at the Scotties Tournament of Hearts. Once again, much to the chagrin of my colleagues from across the country, Manitoba has proven itself the curling capital of Canada.

I know that Jennifer and her rink will proudly represent Canada at the World Women's Curling Championship next month in Sapporo, Japan. As we all remember, almost a year ago to the day, Jennifer and her rink won gold at the Sochi Winter Olympics. Now as they head to the world championship, the entire nation will be cheering them on, and regardless of the time difference in Japan, we will be glued to our televisions.

On behalf of all members of the Parliament of Canada, I wish Jennifer and her rink all the best as she wears the maple leaf and continues to inspire the next generation of curlers.

Go Canada go!

* * *

[*Translation*]

PINK SHIRT DAY

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am very proud to rise in honour of Pink Shirt Day, a day of action against bullying.

[*English*]

I am very proud to stand on behalf of all my NDP colleagues to raise awareness of this pink shirt movement.

[*Translation*]

This day got started in 2007 when two Nova Scotia students wanted to help a teen who was being bullied at school. In Canada, one in three children are victims of bullying.

I myself was a victim of bullying when I was in high school. People said and wrote horrible things about me. I was even spat on. Nobody should be subjected to that kind of treatment. One day, a teacher saw me crying, listened to me and really helped me a lot.

What I want to say today is that we have to tune in to the young people around us. Together, we have to talk about this to get rid of the taboos around bullying. We know that bullying can be motivated by, among other things, homophobia, racism and sexism.

[*English*]

I consider that the federal government has a leading role to play. The NDP thinks that it is time for a national bullying prevention strategy, and we must act now.

* * *

BULGARIA NATIONAL DAY

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute today to the Canadians of Bulgarian descent on the 137th anniversary of the national day of Bulgaria. It is a day that commemorates the struggle of the Bulgarian people to regain independence and sovereignty. Regaining its real sovereignty after the collapse of the communists, Bulgaria made a spectacular journey to democracy, embracing the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Canada and Bulgaria are allies in NATO. They were together in fighting the terror in Afghanistan and they share the responsibility of contributing to solving conflicts in the world and major issues in international development.

A sizeable Bulgarian community lives in Canada today, and it is successfully integrated into the Canadian way of life. It is a respectable and outstanding group within Canadian society, noteworthy for its prosperity and contribution to Canadian society. The community is also a very important bridge between Canada and Bulgaria.

Statements by Members

I invite all hon. members to join me in congratulating Bulgaria on its national day.

God bless Canada and Bulgaria.

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PINK SHIRT DAY

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the eighth annual Pink Shirt Day, the international anti-bullying campaign begun in Nova Scotia when a young man was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to school. Two fellow students, David Shepherd and Travis Price, began distributing pink shirts to protest this bullying and to stand up for their fellow student.

Everyone has been touched by bullying in some form, and unfortunately, far too many people have seen the devastating effects it can have. Whether it is at school, in the workplace, or online, bullying cannot and must not be tolerated in our society. Statistics show that when bystanders intervene, 50% of bullying can end within 10 seconds.

On behalf of the Liberal Party, I want to invite all Canadians across the country to join our schools, workplaces, and communities and wear pink shirts today to help raise awareness and put a stop to the harmful act of bullying.

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NORTH BAY COMMUNITY LEADER

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this February, our government celebrated the 50th anniversary of our flag by recognizing 50 outstanding individuals and organizations for their tremendous contribution to Canada. I had the privilege of recognizing one of my own constituents, Bruce Goulet, who was included in that prestigious group.

Bruce Goulet has led a remarkable life as a World War II veteran, an entrepreneur, a Rotarian, and a civic leader. He has devoted much of his strength, integrity, and passion to his community and his country. He served as mayor, president of the Chamber of Commerce, and director of the Rotary Club.

In his visionary leadership, he helped the North Bay waterfront develop into what it is today. He continues to believe in the power of one individual to make a difference. He is a powerful inspiration and a role model for Canadians.

Colleagues, please join me in recognizing our Bruce Goulet as an extraordinary community worker and a great Canadian.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, March 8 marks the tenth International Women's Day I will be celebrating as a member of Parliament, except that it is not much of a celebration. Instead of eradicating barriers to women's full economic, social, and political participation, the Conservatives have been erecting them.

They have actively undermined many of the advancements essential for the security of women by backtracking on pay equity; eliminating funding for the court challenges program; failing to

create a national child care strategy; decreasing support for international gender-equality projects; failing to address violence against women; attempting to restrict women's reproductive rights; failing to improve the lives of aboriginal women; lacking strategies to address the specific challenges faced by women of colour, women from the LGBTQ community, and women with disabilities; reneging on the commitment to bring in gender-based analysis across ministries; failing to improve women's pension rights; closing three-quarters of all Status of Women offices; and eliminating even the mention of gender equality from the mandate of Status of Women.

It is a daunting list, but New Democrats will not give up the fight. We know that Canadian women deserve fairness, affordability, opportunity, equal pay for work of equal value, a decent standard of living, and the freedom to live without fear. We will never stop in our efforts to ensure the full and equal rights of all women.

* * *

● (1410)

OKOTOKS LEGION 291

Mr. John Barlow (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Royal Canadian Legions in my riding of Macleod, as I am sure they are in many other areas of Canada, are vital to the success of our rural communities. Not only are they responding to the needs of veterans, which is critical, but they are supporting essential community programs.

I am proud to say that the legions in my riding are renowned across the country. For example, Turner Valley Branch 78 spearheaded the establishment of Birth of a Nation Day, and Crowsnest Pass is home to three of Alberta's oldest legions.

Now I am honoured to say that Macleod is also home to one of Canada's newest legions. In October, the Royal Canadian Legion Okotoks Branch 291 earned its charter, celebrating the rebirth of the legion in Okotoks after more than a 20-year absence. The Okotoks legion already boasts more than 150 members, many of whom have served in the Canadian and British armed forces.

The establishment of a new legion is something I think we should all be celebrating. I would like to congratulate the organizers on their success and the beginning of what I hope will be a long legion tradition in Okotoks.

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MATERNAL, NEWBORN, AND CHILD HEALTH

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Winnipeg South Centre has a number of world leaders in the field of maternal, newborn, and child health. Dr. Allan Ronald has led the way for many with his groundbreaking work and research in Africa, and that has now made a difference for many who follow.

Statements by Members

I am very grateful that Dr. Ronald, Dr. Meghan Azad, Dr. Allan Becker, Dr. James Blanchard, and Dr. Terry Klassen have been recognized by the Prime Minister as he hosts Bill Gates today. Their groundbreaking work, which is being done on many continents, has already attracted the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Through the leadership of our Prime Minister, and in partnership with important organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the Mennonite Central Committee, Red River College, and the Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba, millions of women and children are receiving the help they need to give their children the best possible start in life.

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[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a year and a half ago, Canada Post tried to close the Chicoutimi-Nord post office; however, it stayed open thanks to strong, vocal opposition from the public.

Despite this clear message from the people, Canada Post refuses to listen, and last month it again threatened to close that post office.

I rise in the House today to condemn Canada Post's stubbornness and lack of transparency. If I may, I would like to quote the Canadian Postal Service Charter:

At least one month before deciding to permanently close, move or amalgamate corporate post offices, Canada Post will meet with affected customers and communities to jointly explore options and find practical solutions that address customer concerns.

Canada Post officials refused to travel to meet with the local population on two separate occasions, so the evaluation committee will have some explaining to do if it decides to ignore the 2,537 letters expressing opposition to the closure of the Chicoutimi-Nord post office that the people have signed and sent to Ottawa.

Any time Canadians join forces to assert their right to speak, that commands respect. Canada Post needs to respect the people of Chicoutimi-Nord and keep their post office open.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the tax-free savings account is another example of our Conservative government fulfilling our promises to keep taxes low. We are proud that 11 million Canadians of all ages and income levels have opened an account, allowing them to save tax-free, including my 24-year-old daughter. The vast majority of accounts belong to low- and middle-income earners. It is a way for Canadians to save for retirement, for their kids' education, or for a down payment on a house.

The TFSA is helping Canadians, but the opposition wants to take it away. The NDP actually voted against the tax-free savings account, and the Liberal leader wants Canadians to pay more taxes, saying he will implement a carbon tax that will kill jobs and raise the

price on everything. Perhaps he does not understand that ordinary Canadians cannot rely on a wealthy trust fund.

The facts are clear. Only our Conservative government can be trusted to keep taxes low.

* * *

●(1415)

[Translation]

MISSING AND MURDERED ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a round table on the Canada-wide tragedy of murdered and missing aboriginal women will be held this Friday in Ottawa. The Prime Minister has no intention of attending.

Some 1,200 Canadian women are missing; Canada has forsaken even the memory of these young, magnificent women who have gone missing or been murdered. The victims' families have the right to expect that the federal government protect all citizens equally.

[English]

Canadians have a right to know what sort of evil is lurking in the night. We need to understand who is committing these horrors, why and how.

[Translation]

There is a glaring inconsistency here. The Conservative government keeps going on about protecting victims, but it seems that aboriginal women do not count.

[English]

I wish to ask forgiveness from all my aboriginal sisters, forgiveness for the government that has abandoned them and that, by inaction, is complicit with these crimes.

[Translation]

As a woman, I urge the Prime Minister to act like a national leader and protect all women in Canada.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians elected our Conservative government with clear instructions to keep taxes low. I hear that every time I am out door knocking in Calgary Centre. We have delivered on that: promise made, promise kept.

As the member for Burlington just said, 11 million Canadians have actually opened an account so they can save money tax free for really important things for them, such as saving for their child's education, or buying a house or putting it toward their retirement.

Yet we still have the Liberals putting forward this high tax high debt agenda. I have no idea why, because that will hurt Canadian jobs and it will hurt Canadian families. They would raise taxes and take away benefits that we have put in place to help Canadian families.

Statements by Members

Then we have the New Democrats who are always pursuing their risky high tax agenda, like a carbon tax that would kill Canadian jobs and hurt our Canadian economy.

Canadians know that the only party that be counted on for a low—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauséjour.

* * *

[Translation]

MARC CHOUINARD

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Acadia lost a giant in the arts and culture with the death of Marc Chouinard, who left us far too early at the age of 62. Over the decades, his engagement in the arts and culture, often as a volunteer, was crucial to the development and promotion of our Acadian culture.

More recently, as the manager of Moncton's Capitol Theatre, Marc made a tremendous contribution to the cultural and economic vitality of his province and helped open doors for many young artists.

[English]

Though passionate for the arts, Marc also believed in the importance of social and economic development, which he often discussed, sometimes late into the night, with Premier Gallant as well as my colleague from Papineau. I am lucky to have spent so much time with Marc and to consider him a friend.

[Translation]

I would like to extend my condolences to his mother, his sister Carole, who took such wonderful care of him, and to the other members of his family.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under this Conservative government, we have said that we would stand up for Canadian families, and that is what we are doing.

Our new family tax cut will give 100% of families with kids an average of more than \$1,100 per year to spend on their priorities. The majority of these benefits flow to low and middle-income families. Our government understands that parents know what is best for their family.

However, both the Liberal Party and the NDP are against putting money back into the pockets of hard-working families. In fact, they would reverse our tax cuts.

On this side of the House, we will not hike taxes and take benefits away from families like the Liberals and the New Democrats would do. We are proud to stand up for moms and dads across Canada, and we will continue to do so.

[Translation]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader, who promised open and transparent nominations, could not hide his enthusiasm yesterday for Mélanie Joly's nomination bid. The Liberal candidates in the running have cause for concern. Party apparatchiks have offered support to the former Montreal mayoral candidate.

The woman who promised real change quickly fell into the Liberals' bad habits by contradicting her previous statements. Last September she was still saying that she did not want to get involved in politics in the short term. Now, five months later, she is jumping into federal politics, claiming that it is her new passion.

The problem is that she said the same thing about municipal politics just a few months ago, right before she turned her back on the party that she herself founded.

She also claims that she wants to make Montreal a priority in Ottawa again. What does that say about her leader, who was elected in a Montreal-area riding?

The people of Ahuntsic—Cartierville deserve much better. They deserve an NDP member of Parliament.

* * *

● (1420)

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 100% of families with children in Orléans and across Canada will be better off thanks to the new family tax cut.

[Translation]

We expanded and increased the enhanced universal child care benefit so that every family in Canada can benefit.

[English]

The official opposition and the third party would reverse our tax cuts and force every Canadian to pay more, all the while putting more money into the pockets of big bureaucracies.

[Translation]

While they dream of holding Canadians by one hand and at the same time, have their other hand digging in Canadians' pockets, we believe citizens are in a much better position to know how to manage their own family budget.

[English]

The third party leader has already said that he would reverse our tax cuts and would impose more taxes, like a job-killing carbon tax.

[Translation]

Canadians are right to increasingly trust this government to put into their pockets more of the money that they have earned through their hard work.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary committee that will examine and analyze Bill C-51 has the delicate task of protecting both the security and the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

After imposing a gag order on the debate in the House, the government now also seems to want to limit the debate in committee. That does not make any sense. This is a complex law and it is imperative that we hear from experts, legal minds and community leaders, as the Edmonton city police said today.

Will the government give the parliamentary committee time to do its work properly for once?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the committee will be diligent and professional in examining this bill, which is so important to Canadians, in order to protect them from the terrorist threat.

I hope that delay tactics will not be used to stop the committee from examining this important bill since that would prevent Canadians from benefiting from the excellent additional measures found in Bill C-51.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not telling that yesterday the Prime Minister was putting the emphasis on getting the committee to study the bill as quickly as possible, not as thoroughly as possible.

We are talking about the most significant changes to security legislation in our country since 2001, a bill where critical flaws are being revealed by security experts across the country every day. It is simply reckless and irresponsible to try to ram it through without a full and proper study. Canadians deserve better.

Is the Prime Minister simply trying to hide his bill from proper scrutiny?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve better than an opposition leader who attacks the credibility of those who are there to protect us.

Let us face reality. For 30 years, those men and women at CSIS, working at protecting Canadians, have worked within the law. I invite the member to apologize for pretending that they have broken the law, because that is not the case. This is in the report. They are complying with the law.

Let us move this bill forward so we can better protect Canadians.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Barn burnings, Maher Arar, there is a history, Mr. Speaker, and we stand up in favour of the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

However, it is not just security experts who understand that Bill C-51 goes too far. First nations are raising the alarm. The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs is clear:

Oral Questions

—Bill C-51 directly violates the ability of all Indigenous Peoples to exercise, assert and defend their constitutionally-protected and judicially-recognized Indigenous Title and Rights to their respective territories.

Again, Bill C-51 goes well beyond terrorism and will impact constitutionally-protected dissent and protest.

Why is the Prime Minister afraid to hear from first nations themselves?

• (1425)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member to read page 3 of the bill, which clearly states activity that does not undermine the security of Canada. It says, “For greater certainty, it does not include lawful advocacy, protest, dissent and artistic expression”.

The member should read the bill and then we can have a real debate.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC BRIDGE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he is a regular Don Rickles.

Today the Prime Minister is meeting a major CN shareholder. CN owns the Quebec Bridge. The Quebec Bridge is an important piece of federal infrastructure. It is even a national historic site of Canada.

Will the Prime Minister talk to Bill Gates about the Quebec Bridge as Mayor Labeaume has asked? It is high time the Prime Minister stopped misleading the public and started getting that bridge painted.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has committed to spending \$75 million to repaint the Quebec Bridge. Together, all three levels of government have committed to spending \$100 million on this major project. We are asking CN to come to the table and contribute the additional funding needed to make it happen.

* * *

SHIPPING

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since CN is saying it wants to be left out of this, the government will have to listen to Mayor Labeaume and ask Bill Gates to put pressure on CN; Bill Gates is one of the main shareholders.

[English]

The main estimates tabled yesterday by the President of the Treasury Board show a shocking drop in funding for Marine Atlantic. There will be an 85% drop in funding, which includes \$97 million in reductions for its operational budget.

Marine Atlantic represents the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of people in Atlantic Canada and it is constitutionally mandated.

Is the government proposing either higher fees for Marine Atlantic, reduced services or both?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. Leader of the Opposition should speak to somebody in his caucus because this morning, indeed, a member of the NDP did call Marine Atlantic's CEO to get an explanation.

The CEO explained it as follows. It is returning to the base level of funding because this government has provided to it an incredible amount of funding for revitalization of Marine Atlantic.

We have built new facilities. We have entered into new charter agreements. We have invested in Marine Atlantic, so that it will continue to offer the service that we are so proud to offer here in Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DEATH

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court handed down its decision two weeks ago now. Despite a full day of discussion yesterday, we still do not know this government's plan. In fact, there is even more confusion.

Can the government give us a clear indication of what it intends to do about the important issue of physician-assisted death?

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, dying with dignity is a non-partisan issue. It is also an extremely emotionally charged issue. Canadians have diverse viewpoints on this, and our plan is to engage all Canadians in a consultation process that will take into consideration the diverse viewpoints of all Canadians in order to reach a conclusion that is acceptable to everyone.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the big things the Prime Minister needs to get right is getting our resources to market.

With President Obama's veto of the Keystone XL pipeline, the Prime Minister has not fulfilled that responsibility.

To build the public trust that we need to grow our exports, will he at long last work with the provinces to put a price on carbon?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know this member's position: budgets balance themselves and energy projects get to market by themselves.

That said, with respect to Keystone, this is a debate between Canada and the United States, a debate between the president and the American people, the majority of whom are supportive of this project.

Keystone XL would create jobs, strengthen energy security for North America, and the state department was clear that it can be environmentally, sustainably done through Keystone XL.

It is not a question of if, it is a question of when this project will be approved. We will continue to be a strong advocate for responsible resource management.

● (1430)

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no international relationship more important to Canada than that between the U.S. president and the Canadian prime minister.

A diplomatic failure of this magnitude was unthinkable between Brian Mulroney and Ronald Reagan or between Jean Chrétien and Bill Clinton.

When will the Prime Minister take personal responsibility for this diplomatic failure?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last year alone, in full co-operation with the secretary for the department of energy, we have made significant progress in a number of key files related to energy.

Indeed, we have a relationship worth \$140 billion a year in energy trade. We have the most advanced power and gas and oil grids, and pipeline systems known the world over.

We move forward in energy terms as full partners. We are aligned with the United States on reducing emissions and lead the way, for example, in phasing-out traditional coal powered plants on which the president followed our lead.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice is also the Attorney General of Canada. It is his responsibility to assess whether bills introduced here, in Parliament, are legally valid. Experts are already questioning the constitutionality of certain aspects of Bill C-51.

Did the Minister of Justice do his homework and obtain a legal opinion on whether Bill C-51 is constitutional, and will he undertake to submit it to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, which is responsible for studying the bill?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague knows very well that the government makes sure that all the bills it introduces are constitutional.

The bill will protect Canadians' rights. It contains several provisions that increase the powers of the attorney general of Canada and of judges, especially when it comes to legal considerations surrounding the activities that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service might undertake to protect Canadians.

I look forward to debating this bill in committee, and I hope that we can count on the co-operation of the opposition.

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to square that answer with the government's impressive record for passing unconstitutional legislation.

Instead of real scrutiny at committee, what the Conservatives seem to prefer is rubber stamp approval. However, it is precisely because the minister has been unwilling or unable to answer critical questions about this sweeping bill in the House, that Bill C-51 needs full study at committee.

Why is the government always seeking to shut down debate instead of allowing a serious review of sweeping and dangerous legislation like Bill C-51.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we believe that security and liberty go hand in hand.

[Translation]

In order for liberty to flourish, we need security. That is why parliamentarians must give our security and intelligence forces the tools they need to protect Canadians. These are services that most other democratic countries have. However, we will ensure that there is judicial oversight.

I look forward to discussing these issues in committee.

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[English]

PRIVACY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, it is difficult to square that answer with the budget cuts to CSIS and the RCMP.

There are new reports today that the Communications Security Establishment is collecting millions of emails from Canadians to government agencies and storing associated metadata for months or even years. Yet, only four emails a day are considered serious threats.

Open-ended surveillance and maintenance of these records is concerning for Canadians, especially given the weak oversight of security agencies like the Communications Security Establishment.

Could the minister explain why this data is being held for so long?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every communication with the Government of Canada network is monitored for malware and viruses. The only information that is used, retained or shared is information from malicious actors attempting to harm the Government of Canada network.

The independent CSE Commissioner constantly and thoroughly scrutinizes CSE's activities. The CSE Commissioner has never found CSE to have acted unlawfully and has noted CSE's respect for the privacy of all Canadians.

● (1435)

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' haste clearly shows that Canadians have reason to be distrustful of them.

A real study involving multiple meetings and key witnesses is necessary to ensure that we do not pass a bad bill. The consequences are too serious here. The minister is not even capable of explaining his bill to the House.

Why then is he trying to prevent us from thoroughly reviewing it in committee? What does he have to hide?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the measures set out in Bill C-51 are designed to protect Canadians.

It is a no-brainer to share information, prevent terrorists from boarding our planes and allow intelligence officers to dissuade people from falling prey to radicalization.

Bill C-51 contains measures to prevent radicalization and it is consistent with Canadian laws.

What are the New Democrats afraid of? For years, they have consistently opposed all of the measures that we have put in place to protect Canadians from the terrorist threat. Why?

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' lack of credibility can also be attributed to their doublespeak on the subject.

They say that they are concerned about Canadians' safety, but again yesterday, we learned that the law enforcement budget set out in the estimates was reduced by 25%. Moreover, \$1.5 billion that was allocated to the RCMP was diverted for other purposes.

Rather than engaging in more rhetoric, why does the minister not invest where it counts when it comes time to keep Canadians safe?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have increased the budget for intelligence services and the RCMP seven times, despite a lack of support from the opposition.

It is important to remember the measures that we have introduced, such as the legislation to combat terrorism, revoke passports and revoke the dual citizenship of individuals found guilty of terrorism, as well as Bill C-51, which is before us now.

Why do the New Democrats oppose the measures that we are putting in place to protect Canadians?

Let us send this bill to committee, examine the issue and, most importantly, take action. Canadians expect us to do something about this.

Oral Questions

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the Conservatives prepare to give the Canadian Security Intelligence Service considerable powers, the body responsible for reviewing this service will only get an extra \$10,000 this year. That is ridiculous. The body has a limited budget, its members sit part time, and it has a limited mandate to ask questions after the fact, so how can the Conservatives claim that the Security Intelligence Review Committee can truly provide oversight of CSIS's activities?

[English]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the premise of this question is false. The member opposite fails to understand how SIRC operates and, actually, how the main estimates function.

We provide funding that is necessary, both for SIRC and CSIS to operate. Regarding the need, SIRC, as we know, investigates complaints and reviews specific CSIS investigations and activities.

We are proud to stand by SIRC, ensuring that it has the resources and the authority to fully, in an independent way not with partisan politics, review the activities of our intelligence community.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of main estimates, Environment Canada's funding for climate change and clean air has been slashed by 20%. That is \$32 million less for clean air.

To make things worse, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency was cut by a whopping 44%, scrapping support for aboriginal consultation on resource projects.

The environmental assessment process was bad enough and Canadians do not trust the government on the environment as it is, so why is it pursuing these cuts?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is well-known that the main estimates are exactly that, estimates, and do not represent the entire budget for the department.

Our government will remain committed to strong environmental assessments. In fact, we have increased funding and opportunities for aboriginal consultation and public participation in the environmental assessment process.

* * *

•(1440)

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the main estimates show that Marine Atlantic has taken a \$97 million hit in its operating budget. That is an 85% cut to the critical transportation link for Newfoundland and Labrador ferry services that the people and the economy cannot live without. The government has an obligation to protect this ferry service under our terms of union. People are worried.

I spoke with Marine Atlantic today about those funding cuts, and it said, "Wait for the budget". What is the deal? Will services be cut? Yes or no?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will have an opportunity to read into the record exactly what the CEO of Marine Atlantic told him on the telephone. It was a little bit more than that. The reason I know is because we have had a conversation with Marine Atlantic to ensure the fact that it is comfortable going forward with the amounts that are in the main estimates.

We will continue to work with it in its budgeting to ensure that it provides the service that we have so well invested in, in the past five years.

* * *

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the minister knows every word of that of conversation, it must have been one of those three-way calls set up for her.

It has been said that we cannot judge a book by its cover, so let us look through the actual main estimates to find out what Conservative priorities really are. The devil is in the details.

Let us see here. There are cuts to affordable housing, cuts to consular services, cuts to first nations health, cuts to fishery protection, and Conservative cuts to disease prevention. But wait, while cutting these essential services that Canadians need, Conservatives did find extra money for, wait for it, ministerial salaries and their chauffeur budgets.

How can Conservative priorities be so out of whack and offline with what Canadians actually need and deserve?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it feels like Groundhog Day.

Every year, this government tables the estimates and every year, we get the righteous indignation of the opposition party. Every year, we table a budget which is good news for Canadians and every year the opposition votes against it.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked about armed forces member Robyn Young's misdiagnosis by a military doctor which caused her considerable harm.

The minister responded that the Defence Department is continuing to cover these costs, but that was disingenuous. It only started to cover them recently and has not reimbursed the tens of thousands of dollars she has already spent. In fact, Robyn's family has had to resort to community fundraising to help pay her health bills.

Oral Questions

When will Ms. Young finally get full and fair compensation from the government?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we sympathize with this individual and her family for everything they have gone through. The Canadian Forces Health Services group is conducting a full review of this case and all the medical decisions that were involved. This is a priority for the Canadian Armed Forces.

While this review is going on, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are continuing to cover her medical costs and meet her medical needs related to her present condition. I can assure the House that the minister and our government are committed to doing everything possible to help Captain Young.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, President Obama's veto of Keystone XL marks the Prime Minister's latest failure to advance Canada's economic interests. Brian Mulroney would have gotten Keystone XL approved with Ronald Reagan. Jean Chrétien would have gotten it done with Bill Clinton.

Does the Prime Minister recognize that his failure to build relationships is costing Canadian jobs, and does he not understand that a personal relationship with the leader of our biggest trading partner is, in his own words, a no-brainer?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the party that talks about carbon taxes and energy magically getting to new markets, cherry-picking pipelines. This is a debate between the American people and the President of the United States, and the majority of people are supportive of this project. Keystone XL would create jobs on both sides of the border. It is a matter of energy security for North America.

This is not a question of if; it is a question of when. On the science and the business case for this project, it will go forward, and we will continue to be a strong advocate for this job-creating project and our approach to responsible resource development.

• (1445)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): That is the arrogance, Mr. Speaker, that got us a veto from Obama on Keystone XL.

To get projects approved, we need to work with others, but this is the Prime Minister who will not meet with premiers or first nations' leaders, who calls environmentalists eco-terrorists, and the Prime Minister who cancelled the three amigos conference with Mexico and the U.S. In the words of Brian Mulroney, "...the top foreign policy priority of the prime minister" should be to have a personal relationship with the U.S. president.

Why does the Prime Minister not take Mulroney's advice and build the relationships we need to defend Canadian jobs?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to get Canadian projects moving forward, we do need to work together. That is why the Prime Minister was in British Columbia

last week working with the Province of British Columbia, announcing accelerated capital cost allowances, to make sure that we are in the most competitive position possible when it comes to tax policies so that LNG projects can go forward.

It has been estimated that of the 19 proposals for LNG projects in the province of British Columbia, if five of them are approved, it would create over 100,000 jobs in the province, and that will be realized only because we have a Conservative government with a Conservative Prime Minister who is working with others to make sure that our projects get to world markets.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, universality of service continues to be a policy that haunts the Canadian Armed Forces. It has been condemned not just by soldiers but by the National Defence and the Veterans Ombudsmen. An internal report by DND shows that 70% of Afghan war veterans will be involuntarily released by the CAF within 10 years of deployment. This policy of discharge for those who face mental health challenges must be changed.

When will the minister finally do the right thing, the fair thing, and fix this harsh and arbitrary policy?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ill and severely injured personnel who are no longer able to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces are provided with up to three years to prepare for the transition to civilian life. The armed forces can also transfer members, if they wish, to cadet organizations, administration and training, or even to the Canadian Rangers, where they remain eligible for promotion. As always, the military provides comprehensive health care and career transition support, including job placement assistance.

It is our government that made these policy changes because we recognize that the sacrifices made by our serving men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces deserve to be handled correctly.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces health services examined the files of 30,000 soldiers who served in Afghanistan, but we have learned that 70% of these soldiers will be released as a result of the universality of service principle.

This means that veterans struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder and depression will be shown the door.

When will this government stop trying to save money at our soldiers' expense?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Nothing is further from the truth, Mr. Speaker.

It was our government who amended the universality of service policy to allow for a transition period of up to three years for members of the Canadian Armed Forces to prepare for civilian life. Members of the Armed Forces will have access to health services, integrated personal support centres, and they can go to the Department of Veterans Affairs and other places as required. We will work with our soldiers to build an individualized transition plan.

It was our government that increased the annual mental health budget for the Armed Forces by over 20%, allowing us to do more than double the amount of full-time mental health workers in the Armed Forces

* * *

*[Translation]***VETERANS**

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to avoid hearing complaints from veterans, the Conservatives simply eliminated the satisfaction survey of the department's clients.

In 2010, the satisfaction rate dropped drastically in response to the cuts, so the Conservatives just stopped surveying veterans. That is ridiculous.

Instead of ignoring veterans' needs, will the minister reinstate the service quality survey and, more importantly, improve the services provided to veterans?

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be part of a government that in 2010 worked with Statistics Canada to create the Life After Service Studies, which allow us to focus specifically on thousands who are transitioning and leaving the Canadian Armed Forces and becoming veterans. It is not just a client satisfaction survey, but an in-depth study. I have already directed the department to increase its focus on medically released veterans so that we can provide a better outcome for all of them after they leave their service to Canada.

• (1450)

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reason the Conservatives do not do the survey is that they do not want to hear stories like that of Robyn Young, one of the bravest young women I have ever met in my life as a member of Parliament. This woman has gone through pure hell with the Department of National Defence, and so has her mother. All they are asking for is basic dignity and basic responsibility from the department to ensure that they get all the help and services they both need to get their lives back to normal.

DND should not be reviewing this itself; rather, the minister should be reviewing it. Will he stand up and tell the family they will get all the benefits they need so they can get back to living their lives in a normal way?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank Captain Young for her service to this country. She is a brave young woman. I can say that we are very sympathetic about her situation and want to help her. The minister has said that he will do everything and commit everything to helping her through this crisis. I would remind everyone that if she has outstanding medical claims, she should submit them and the Armed Forces will reimburse her.

Since this is a health-related matter, it would be a breach of patient confidentiality and the Privacy Act regulations to discuss this matter further.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ISIL remains a threat to regional and international security. It has declared war on Canada and called for brutal attacks against Canadians.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence please update the House on Canada's continued mission to fight the savage ISIL death cult in Iraq?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Pickering—Scarborough East for his services to Canada as one of our Armed Forces veterans.

I am pleased to inform the House today that while taking part in coalition operations yesterday in support of the Iraqi security forces, our CF-18 Hornets successfully struck three ISIL fighting positions north of Mosul using precision-guided munitions.

We are continuing to face this threat head on. ISIL has suffered a number of tactical setbacks and is pressed on multiple fronts. ISIL is struggling to sustain its military efforts in Iraq. We are tremendously proud of the work being done by the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces in Operation Impact to stop this jihadist terrorist cult.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow families of the over 1,200 indigenous women and girls who have gone missing or have been murdered in Canada will come together in preparation for Friday's national round table to offer their testimony, to find answers and solutions to end violence.

Families will also be looking to the current government to finally change its rhetoric and come together with its provincial and territorial counterparts to act upon coordinated solutions and finally call for a national public inquiry.

Will the government listen to their plea?

Oral Questions

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday in the House, the Government of Canada will have a representative at the round table. However, I want to be very clear: we do not support a national inquiry. There have been more than 40 studies. Now is actually the time for action, and that is what families have asked for.

We all need to support the police to catch those responsible for these heinous crimes and to make sure that they are held accountable and punished. That is what families are looking for. They are looking for strong action. We tabled an action plan in the House in September 2014.

The opposition members do not support that. They do not support actions for families. Whether it be matrimonial property rights or the Victims Bill of Rights, the—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, gender equality has yet to be achieved here in Canada and around the world.

In a week and a half, the UN Commission on the Status of Women will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Beijing platform for action on gender equality. International support is quite widespread, and many countries have already reaffirmed their commitment.

Will Canada be one of those countries and immediately reaffirm its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action?

[English]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, we have been focused on and reviewing the Beijing accord. Our intention is to attend the international event that is taking place, which celebrates all women and the opportunities they have in the future.

The Government of Canada has been very focused on International Women's Week. I encourage the opposition to please support what we are doing through that week, March 2 to 8, to ensure that women are provided opportunities in Canada to excel and achieve what they absolutely can achieve through the great commitment to Canada.

* * *

• (1455)

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are fewer and fewer volunteers to help Canadians with their taxes. The Conservatives are adding to the red tape burden and reducing training opportunities for volunteers. Also, believe it or not, in 2016 the Conservative are even going to make these volunteers

submit to fingerprinting. It seems the Conservatives are doing everything they can to complicate the lives of honest citizens.

Will the minister give the volunteers what they need to help Canadian families prepare their tax returns?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is entirely false. In fact, I was just in Brampton on Monday of this week announcing that CRA has put an additional \$1 million into funding our volunteer program. We enlist about 16,000 volunteers across Canada every year, who help some 600,000 low-income new Canadians, aboriginals, and others to fill out their tax forms and get their benefits.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' failure to fund infrastructure is taking an environmental and economic toll on our cities. At a community meeting in my riding last night, people raised serious concerns that the planned electrification of the Union Pearson rail link in Toronto could be in jeopardy.

Diesel service is unacceptable and has been banned in places like New York City for over a century, so federal support is badly needed. Cities are crying out for infrastructure funding and clean trains.

Why is the federal government failing to act?

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 have been ready for business since April 1 of last year to receive projects from provinces and municipalities. In the provincial-territorial component of the building Canada plan, we need to receive the support and the prioritization by the provinces for projects that we have been waiting for since April 1. Lately, we have received some information from the Province of Ontario, and we are working on that. However, we need them and the municipalities on board.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, about a month ago I asked the Minister of Transport about new data on grain shipments being published weekly by the AG Transport Coalition. The latest figures say that the railways have supplied on time only 44% of the grain cars ordered by their customers. In total, they are nearly 20,000 cars behind; shipments to the U.S. are especially poor; but CN is doing better than CP.

Does the minister agree that these figures are accurate? If so, do they represent, in her opinion, suitable and adequate accommodation for grain shippers?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot confirm someone else's data. What I can say is that the data we do receive indicate that the order in council and act that we put in place are working for grain farmers here in Canada, that indeed the grain is moving to the port and that it is indeed happening in the framework that we expected it would.

We will continue to work with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. We will continue to work with the grain farmers in this country to ensure that they receive the service needed to get our grain to market.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Marine Atlantic is a vital transportation link between Newfoundland and Labrador and the rest of Canada, so vital to our economy and well-being that it is constitutionally protected under the Terms of Union. Included in the cut to Marine Atlantic in the estimates is \$97 million in operating funding. An earlier cut of \$16.3 million to Marine Atlantic's operating budget resulted in fare increases in 2012, 2013, and 2014.

Can the minister guarantee that this cut to operational funding to Marine Atlantic will not result in further fare increases and cuts to service?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question because it gives me the opportunity to reiterate what the Minister of the Environment said. The main estimates are really that. They are estimates and they do not reflect the total budget that will be allocated to any individual part of our department at any given time. It is important to make sure that we are aware that the government is supporting Marine Atlantic, both in terms of capital and in operating funds, and we will continue to live up to that obligation.

* * *

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a food crisis in northern Canada, and the Conservatives misled Canadians about fixing it.

Just before the Auditor General's report, the Conservatives claimed there would be an extra \$11 million in the nutrition north program. Including that money, the yearly total is what they have been spending since the program started.

Why did the Conservatives mislead Canadians and northerners about the money in this program, and where is the \$7 million extra needed for the 50 communities that are not included in the program?

● (1500)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member cares to look at the estimates, which are estimates, he will see that there is increased funding for nutrition north, as was announced earlier, and we are going to continue our campaign to engage with northerners to continue to improve that program.

TAXATION

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, communities in the far north of Ontario are already dealing with underfunded and overstretched health services. In the case of emergency services, we often have to rely on the brave medevac crews, who sometimes fly in brutal conditions to get patients to hospitals in the south. It is a very expensive but essential service.

Will the Minister of National Revenue explain why she has decided to apply the HST to vital medical flights that have already been approved by the Ontario ministry of health? Would her time not be better spent going after offshore tax havens than shaking down our vital medical services of the north?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly take that comment under advisement, but as far as international tax evasion goes, we have zero tolerance for that in this government. The CRA has an excellent record of combatting international tax evasion through over 8,600 cases identifying over \$5.6 billion in additional taxes. Our voluntary disclosure program is at its highest level ever and is exponentially increasing because of our efforts.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, improving the health of mothers, newborns, and children around the world is Canada's top international development priority. Thanks to the leadership of our Prime Minister and our government's partnerships with many organizations, progress is being made. In over 125 countries, maternal death rates have declined sharply in the past five years.

Could the parliamentary secretary please update the House on Canada's important work on this file?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are pleased to welcome to Ottawa one of our closest partners in the efforts to improve maternal, newborn, and child health, Bill Gates.

We are proud of the work our government has done with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to keep these critical issues at the forefront of the global agenda and to put an end to the tragedy of women and children dying needlessly from causes that we know we can prevent.

Work by our government and the Gates foundation has contributed to the immunization of 26 million children in 46 countries since 2011 and will avert 500,000 future deaths. Our Government of Canada will continue to lead in saving the lives of mothers and children.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a recent audit from the Department of National Defence confirmed that despite the government's repeated public announcements about creating a squadron of long-range drones based at 5 Wing Goose Bay, DND rather indefinitely delayed the program due to a lack of oversight, a lack of information, and unclear objectives.

I ask the Minister of National Defence why the government is making repeated public announcements for programs at 5 Wing Goose Bay with no real intention of delivering on those commitments.

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is constantly reviewing, as are our Canadian Armed Forces, all of our services and all of the ways we can enhance the way we defend and protect our country.

I would like to remind the member that it is our government that has been able to purchase a number of additional pieces of equipment, including new Leopard tanks, new C-17 tactical lift aircraft, and new Hercs. We have the national shipbuilding program and the Harry DeWolf Arctic offshore patrol vessels that are going to be built. All this is going to enhance the security of our nation and provide the resources that are needed by the members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Ferme aux Champêtreries, a social economy enterprise in Haut-Saint-François, creates jobs for young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 who need help.

The Ferme aux Champêtreries applied for a training subsidy as part of the skills link program in April 2013. It is now February 2015 and they still do not have an answer.

Why is the government dragging its feet on this file? Is it pinching pennies to balance the budget at the expense of young people? Unbelievable.

• (1505)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we provide funding to businesses to train young workers in all sectors, and hundreds of thousands of young people have already benefited.

However, I can assure my hon. colleague that tax hike plans like those put forward by his party and the Liberal Party will hurt not only workers, but also the small and medium-sized businesses that hire them. We are cutting taxes for small and medium-sized businesses to create jobs and hope.

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing the right conditions so that industry and business can succeed and compete in the global economy. Canada benefits from large reserves of natural gas but has limited capacity to supply it to emerging international and domestic markets, where demand is growing. That is why our government recently announced the plan to support jobs and growth in the emerging liquified natural gas, or LNG, industry in British Columbia.

Could the hard-working Minister of Industry please update the House on what our government is doing to attract business investment in British Columbia?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kelowna for this very important question. Equally, I would like to thank the B.C. caucus chair, our friend from Prince George—Peace River, for being a persistent advocate on the importance of standing up for the LNG industry in our home province of British Columbia.

British Columbia is home to 2.9 million cubic feet of natural gas, and there are currently 19 LNG projects in British Columbia. Ten of them have received export permits from the National Energy Board, and, as I have said, if five of them were to move forward, it would create over 100,000 full-time, well-paying jobs in the province of British Columbia.

However, for British Columbia and Canada to move forward to get our products to world markets and get world prices, we have to make sure that we are competitive. That is why our Prime Minister was in British Columbia, working with the Premier of British Columbia and working as well in co-operation with all of the coastal first nations and with first nations across British Columbia on these key projects to make sure we all benefit from them.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a letter from 120 businesses, scientists, lawyers, and citizens is begging the Prime Minister to rethink dangerous changes to the aquaculture regulations. The minister wants to sidestep the Fisheries Act, which now prohibits releasing toxic substances into fish-bearing waters.

After gutting the Fisheries Act, the Conservatives are putting up more challenges to habitat protection.

Will the government listen to these concerns and withdraw these damaging changes?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, aquaculture creates jobs and economic growth in many rural and coastal communities in Atlantic Canada and on the west coast as well. That is precisely why our government is committed to responsible aquaculture development.

Private Members' Business

If the member had actually read the regulations, he would know that they would actually increase environmental oversight for this industry. On this side of the House, we believe science and common sense should prevail.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, airports are public assets that play a major strategic role in the economy.

The Institute for Governance of Private and Public Organizations issued a damning assessment of the governance and accountability of Canada's airports. Aéroports de Montréal is a good example. Not only is it not audited by the Auditor General, but once appointed, its directors do not have to be accountable to the public when it comes to awarding contracts, overall management of the airport, or even soundscape management.

The reality is that ADM has total control and Transport Canada is asleep at the switch. This is the 21st century, and it is high time that the government imposed a transparent and accountable mode of management on our airports, through either scrutiny by the Auditor General or the creation of a review committee—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of Transport.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, because it allows me to talk about the Canada Transportation Act review, which this government has embarked on early in order to deal with issues outstanding with respect to the transportation of grain in the country. As well, it will allow the chair of the committee to take a look at governance at our institutions, including airports in the country.

I look forward to the advice from the chair of the committee.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

REFORM ACT, 2014

The House resumed from February 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-586, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Parliament of Canada Act (candidacy and caucus reforms), be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: It being 3:10 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Monday, February 23, 2015, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-586 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

• (1515)

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

(Division No. 341)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Anders
Anderson	Angus
Armstrong	Ashton
Aspin	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Barlow	Bateman
Bélanger	Bellavance
Benoit	Benskin
Bergen	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Borg	Boughen
Boutin-Sweet	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brousseau	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge	Butt
Byrne	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Caron
Carrie	Casey
Chicoine	Chisholm
Chisu	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Cleary
Clement	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crockatt	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dechert	Devolin
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dreeshen	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseauit
Dykstra	Easter
Egliniski	Eyking
Falk	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Foote
Freeland	Freeman
Galipeau	Gallant
Garrison	Genest
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Hsu	Hughes
Jones	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kellway	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	Lauzon
Laverdière	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mai
Marston	Martin

Masse
 Mayes
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 Menegakis
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
 Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nicholls
 Norlock
 Oliver
 Opitz
 Pacetti
 Patry
 Perkins
 Pilon
 Poilievre
 Quach
 Raitt
 Rankin
 Raynault
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Sandhu
 Scarpaleggia
 Scott
 Sellah
 Shipley
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Stewart
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Toet
 Trost
 Trudeau
 Turnel
 Valcourt
 Van Kesteren
 Vaughan
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Williamson
 Woodworth
 Young (Oakville)
 Yurdiga

Mathysen
 McCallum
 McGuinty
 McLeod
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
 Mourani
 Murray
 Nash
 Nicholson
 Nunez-Melo
 O'Neill Gordon
 O'Toole
 Papillon
 Pécelet
 Perreault
 Plamondon
 Preston
 Rafferty
 Rajotte
 Ravignat
 Regan
 Rempel
 Rickford
 Rousseau
 Saxton
 Schellenberger
 Seeback
 Shea
 Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
 Smith
 Sorenson
 St-Denis
 Stoffer
 Sullivan
 Tilson
 Toone
 Trottier
 Truppe
 Uppal
 Valeriotte
 Van Loan
 Vellacott
 Warawa
 Watson
 Wong
 Yelich
 Young (Vancouver South)
 Zimmer — 260

NAYS

Members

Bennett
 Charlton
 Dion
 Garneau
 Hayes
 James
 Michaud
 Rathgeber
 Wilks — 17

Brahmi
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Fry
 Goldring
 Hyer
 May
 Payne
 Sgro

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
 (Bill read the third time and passed)

The Speaker: Because of the deferred recorded division, government orders will be extended by nine minutes.

Routine Proceedings

ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

February 25, 2015

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 25th day of February, 2015, at 10:02 a.m.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace,

Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill S-221, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (assaults against public transit operators)—Chapter 1, and Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts relating to agriculture and agri-food—Chapter 2.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1520)

[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 24 petitions.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, 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 delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, respecting its participation to the 36th interparliamentary meeting with the European Parliament's delegation responsible for the relations with Canada and its parliamentary mission to the country that will hold the next rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union held in Brussels, Belgium, Berlin, Germany and Riga, Latvia, from November 10 to November 20, 2014.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, entitled "Strengthening the Protection of Women in our Immigration System".

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

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the report is accompanied by a supplementary report from the official opposition, the NDP. The report on protecting women in our immigration system is interesting, but it completely ignores some important details that practically all of the witnesses agreed on. For example, the concept of conditional permanent residence should be eliminated, because it makes women more vulnerable. Our report also calls on the government to make it easier for newcomer women to connect with organizations on the ground that provide front line services, including, for example, assistance in situations of spousal violence and information concerning their rights.

[English]

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, entitled "Management of Municipal Solid Waste and Industrial Materials".

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

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP members want to thank the witnesses who contributed to this study on municipal waste. However, the report is missing some important information, which can be found in the NDP's dissenting report, including for instance, the fact that, according to the Conference Board of Canada's annual report, in 2014 Canada ranked last among 16 OECD countries regarding waste management. Furthermore, experts are calling on the federal government to show some leadership by harmonizing programs concerning extended producer responsibility. Lastly, the witnesses also talked about the need to balance market forces so that low-carbon-emission technologies can be developed in the area of waste management and businesses can invest in those technologies.

* * *

●(1525)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-655, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (interference with hunting, trapping, fishing or sport shooting).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce my private member's bill that would amend the Criminal Code to make it an offence to interfere with lawful hunting, fishing, trapping or sport shooting in Canada.

These outdoor heritage activities have played an integral role in shaping Canada's social and cultural heritage, and make a significant contribution to the national economy. Hunters, anglers, trappers and sport shooters have made important contributions to the understanding, conservation restoration and management of Canada's vital fish and wildlife resources.

While there is a patchwork of legislation at the provincial and territorial levels, the bill seeks to harmonize and clarify across Canada the protection of persons pursuing all of these outdoor heritage activities by placing these offences within the Criminal Code of Canada.

Finally, I want to bring fairer representation for Canadian anglers, hunters, trappers and sport shooters to Parliament. Animal rights groups would rather have us end our passion for these outdoor heritage activities. Well, I am convinced that these activities are just as important now as they ever were, and I want to ensure that those who enjoy these outdoors activities get the protection they deserve. I believe this legislation will do just that.

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

* * *

ANTI-SEMITISM

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, in the opinion of the House:

a) there has been, in the words of the Joint Statement issued following the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on January 22, 2015, "an alarming increase in Antisemitism worldwide," including the firebombing of synagogues and community centres, the vandalizing of Jewish memorials and cemeteries, incendiary calls for the destruction of Israel and the Jewish people, and anti-Jewish terror;

b) this global anti-Semitism constitutes not only a threat to Jews but an assault on our shared democratic values and our common humanity;

Therefore the House:

a) declares its categorical condemnation of anti-Semitism;

b) reaffirms the importance of the Ottawa Protocol on Combating anti-Semitism as a model for domestic and international implementation;

c) reaffirms, in the words of the Ottawa Protocol, that, "Criticism of Israel is not antisemitic, and saying so is wrong. But singling Israel out for selective condemnation and opprobrium - let alone denying its right to exist or seeking its destruction - is discriminatory and hateful, and not saying so is dishonest;"

And the House further calls upon the government to:

a) continue advancing the combating of anti-Semitism as a domestic and international priority;

b) expand engagement with civil society, community groups, educators, and other levels of government to combat anti-Semitism and to promote respect, tolerance, and mutual understanding.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the honour to present to the House a petition, which is hereby certified as correct as to form and content.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

This is a petition to the House of Commons calling on the government to respect the rights of small family farms to store, trade and use seed.

[English]

DEMENTIA

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions that I would like to present today.

The first petition has signatories from Kitchener, Ontario, and Yorkton, Saskatchewan. They call on the Minister of Health and the House of Commons to pass my bill, Bill C-356, an act respecting a national dementia strategy.

● (1530)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from communities in Nickel Belt, including Azilda, Chelmsford, Val Caron, Capreol, and Sudbury. The petitioners want the government to ensure that Canadian policies and programs are developed in consultation with small family farmers and that they protect the rights of small family farmers in the global south to preserve, use, and freely exchange seeds.

AUTISM

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present several petitions regarding autism spectrum disorders, which are characterized by social and communication challenges and a pattern of repetitive behaviours and interests. They are lifelong, affect development and life experiences, and exert emotional and financial pressures on families.

The petitioners call on the government to work with the provinces, territories, and stakeholders to develop a pan-Canadian strategy for autism spectrum disorders.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition to ensure that Canadians have a fair electoral system. This petition is signed by roughly 160 people from Kitchener-Waterloo and southwestern Ontario.

They are calling on the House of Commons to immediately undertake public consultations across Canada to amend the Canada Elections Act to ensure that voters can cast an equal and effective vote, to be represented fairly in Parliament regardless of political belief or place of residence, are governed by a fairly elected Parliament with a share of seats held by each political party that closely reflects the popular vote, and live under legitimate laws approved by a majority of elected parliamentarians representing the majority of voters.

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present in the House today a petition signed by almost 300 people in my riding.

They are calling on the Government of Canada to adopt international aid policies that support small farmers, and especially women, and recognize their vital role in the struggle against hunger and poverty, while ensuring that these policies respect the right of small family farms to store, trade and use their seed.

[English]

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today.

The first petition calls upon the House to condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy terminations, which gives rise to a variety of factors, including creating a global gender imbalance.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with impaired driving; in other words, drunk drivers.

The petitioners call upon the House to pass tougher laws, so that new mandatory minimum sentences are available for people convicted of impaired driving causing death, and redefining the offence of impaired driving causing death as vehicular manslaughter.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the citizens of Fleetwood—Port Kells to present a petition signed by dozens of local residents who are outraged by the unnecessary death of a young woman killed by a drunk driver.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to enact tougher laws, including mandatory sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death. The petitioners also ask that the offence of impaired driving causing death be redefined as vehicular manslaughter.

JUSTICE

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

The first petition is in relation to mandatory minimums. The petitioners are all constituents from my own riding, from North Saanich and Salt Spring Island, and elsewhere in Saanich—Gulf Islands. They oppose the use of mandatory minimums as they are offensive to our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and lead to the construction of new prisons.

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has over 500 signatures from across Canada, including from my riding. The petitioners are calling for stable, predictable funding for our national public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada.

Government Orders

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I sadly present this petition to inform the House that Bryan McCron, a 49-year-old single dad, was tragically killed by a drunk driver. As he lay dying along the side of the freeway with his son holding him, the drunk driver came over and started beating up on both of them.

Families for Justice is a group of Canadians who have also lost loved ones to impaired drivers. They believe that Canada's impaired driving laws are much too lenient. They want the crime to be called vehicular homicide, which is in Bill C-52, and they also want the government to introduce legislation that would require mandatory sentencing for those who have killed somebody while driving drunk.

DEMENTIA

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present in the House a petition signed by nearly 100 residents from the constituency I represent, Burnaby—New Westminster, as well as residents from Delta and Surrey, British Columbia.

The petitioners call upon the government to address the deplorable fact that we do not have a national strategy for dementia. They call upon the House of Commons to pass Bill C-356, which was introduced by the NDP MP for Nickel Belt.

The strategy would require the Minister of Health to initiate discussions within 30 days of the bill coming into effect, develop national objectives, provide an annual report, and also ensure that there is greater investment in research, discovery and development of treatments for dementia and dementia-related diseases that would prevent, help or reverse all of those dementia-related diseases.

* * *

• (1535)

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. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

TOUGHER PENALTIES FOR CHILD PREDATORS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Sex Offender Information Registration Act, to enact the High Risk Child Sex Offender Database Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

Hon. Joe Oliver (for the Minister of Justice) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Joe Oliver (for the Minister of Justice) moved that bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to voice my support for Bill C-26, the tougher penalties for child predators act, during third reading debate. This is critical legislation that addresses concerns that I believe we all share.

Bill C-26 reflects the ongoing efforts by this government to combat all forms of child sexual exploitation and denounce the grave and reprehensible nature of such heinous crimes. The bill is another concrete example of our commitment to protect Canadian families, communities and, above all, to protect the most vulnerable and valuable members of our society, our children.

We know that children are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, and are far more likely to be victims of sexual crimes than are adults. Our violent crime rates are trending downward in Canada. It is very worrisome that the number of child sexual offences reported to police continues to rise.

In 2013, police reported some 4,200 incidents of sexual violations against children, a 6% increase in the rate from the previous year. As noted by Statistics Canada, in its report on police reported crime released in July 2014, sexual offences against children was one of the few categories of violent crimes to increase in Canada in 2013.

I think we can all agree that these numbers are a cause for concern. Let me assure the House that the troubling reality behind those numbers is exactly what the tougher penalties for child predators act aims to address.

Government Orders

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

One of the amendments to criminal law proposed in Bill C-26 seeks to deter people from committing such horrific crimes by ensuring that offenders are liable for the harm they cause children and by improving our capacity to monitor these offenders and prevent recidivism.

More specifically, Bill C-26 proposes increasing mandatory minimum penalties and maximum penalties for many sexual offences against children.

For example, Bill C-26 will ensure that anyone who commits any hybrid offence involving sexual contact is liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than two years less a day when the person is found guilty on summary conviction and a term of 14 years when the person is found guilty on indictment.

[*English*]

Bill C-26 also proposes to increase the penalties for making and distributing child pornography and to make these offences strictly indictable to better reflect their seriousness. Child pornography offences can have long-lasting and devastating impacts on victims, particularly when images and videos are posted on the Internet. Once on the web, child pornographic images can quickly be disseminated around the world and might be accessed indefinitely, with the result of re-victimizing the child victim at every click.

This bill would also ensure that committing a child sexual offence while on a conditional sentence order, parole, or statutory release would be considered an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes to assist in preventing future offences by convicted child sexual offenders.

Bill C-26 proposes to increase maximum penalties for violations of prohibition orders, probation orders, and peace bonds. Canadians are rightly concerned about the mobility and conduct of known child sexual predators once they are released into the community. Stricter measures are needed to ensure that supervision orders are observed and that breaches of conditions result in appropriate consequences. These conditions, which may include refraining from being in contact with a victim or staying away from a specific household or prohibitions around the use of weapons, alcohol, or drugs, are imposed to protect the children. A breach of these conditions generally means that there is an increased risk that the offender may commit further sexual offences. Therefore, Bill C-26 would increase the maximum penalties for breaches of conditions of any of these orders, from six to 18 months if preceded by summary conviction, and from two to four years if preceded by indictment.

Bill C-26 not only sends a strong signal that the protection of children is a paramount value of Canadian society but also communicates the important message that every victim matters.

The reforms in Bill C-26 would also amend the Canada Evidence Act to ensure that spouses of individuals accused of child pornographic offences would be compellable witnesses for the crown. The testimony of an accused spouse may be required to facilitate the prosecution of a child pornography offence when the pornographic material is found on a home computer, for example.

[*Translation*]

However, the amendments set out in Bill C-26 do not stop there. In order to further address the risk that sex offenders pose to children, Bill C-26 proposes amendments to the Sex Offender Information Registration Act that would require sex offenders to notify authorities of any absences of seven days or more for any trip within Canada or abroad, as well as the dates of their travel and the locations where they will be staying.

It is important to note that child sex offenders will be expected to meet these obligations regardless of the duration of their trip.

• (1545)

[*English*]

The proposed amendments would also increase our knowledge of sexual offenders by authorizing the sharing of information on registered sexual offenders between National Sex Offender Registry officials and the Canada Border Services Agency. In particular, this would assist in preventing and addressing offenders who travel abroad to commit sexual offences against children.

Bill C-26 also proposes to create a national, publicly accessible database of high-risk child sexual offenders who have been the subject of a public notification in a provincial or territorial jurisdiction. A centralized database would help to ensure that law enforcement and the public had greater access to information about high-risk child sex offenders.

Our government recognizes that the issue of child sexual exploitation is not one dimensional and requires a multi-pronged or holistic approach. Although the criminal law reforms proposed in Bill C-26 are a critical part of the overall response, I am pleased that our government has dedicated over \$10 million since 2010 for 21 new or enhanced child advocacy centres to address the needs of child and youth victims of crime and to assist with the recovery of victims who have suffered significant trauma as a result of those heinous crimes.

The bill aims to further protect the most vulnerable members of our society, our children, from exploitation by providing measures designed to deter and denounce crimes of a sexual nature committed against them.

The sentencing amendments proposed in the bill include mandatory consecutive sentences, which would ensure that in cases of multiple crimes, including in instances where offences were committed against multiple victims, offenders would not receive what is commonly coined a "sentence discount" at the time they were sentenced.

Before describing the specifics of these amendments, allow me to provide some background with respect to the existing sentencing principles that are applicable to multiple offences. I will then focus my remarks on the proposed amendments to the sentencing regime with respect to child sexual offences.

Government Orders

Generally, the Criminal Code provides that a court has the discretion to order that a term of imprisonment be served consecutively to any sentence the offender is already serving or to any other sentence of imprisonment the court imposes, whether it is a result of the non-payment of a fine or not. If this provision sounds confusing, it is because it represents an amalgamation of sentencing rules that pre-date Confederation. Moreover, amendments over the years have further complicated the statement of the rules contained within the Criminal Code.

In addition to these Criminal Code rules, case law offers guidance with respect to the circumstances in which consecutive or concurrent sentences are imposed on an offender.

In general, courts will order that the sentence for two or more offences arising out of one continuous criminal act or single transaction, also referred to as the “same event or series of events” rule, will be served concurrently, or if members prefer, simultaneously. In these cases, the offender will serve the longer of the sentences imposed.

Offences or multiple convictions that arise out of a separate criminal transaction generally will garner consecutive sentences, which are served one after the other. The imposition of concurrent sentences for offences committed as part of the same event or series of events usually reflects the fact that the guilty mind of the accused is the same throughout the event or events, as opposed to offences arising out of separate criminal transactions. That said, courts will be reluctant to order that offences committed as part of the same event or series of events be served concurrently when it would allow the offender to commit subsequent offences with impunity, especially where the subsequent offence is particularly serious in nature.

For example, courts will order consecutive terms of imprisonment for an offence, the first offence, that is committed while fleeing from the police, the second offence. They will also order that an offence committed while on bail be served concurrently to the term of imprisonment for the predicate offence. The determination of whether sentences are to be served concurrently or consecutively, therefore, is a fact-specific inquiry as to whether the connection between the two offences is sufficiently close to warrant concurrent sentences.

It is important to outline the relevant sentencing principles at play, especially when discussing concurrent and consecutive sentences. The Criminal Code provides that the fundamental purpose of sentencing is to contribute to respect for the law and the maintenance of a just, peaceful, and safe society by imposing fit sentences that have one or more of the following objectives: denunciation, deterrence, separation of offenders from society, rehabilitation, reparation for harms done to victims, and the promotion of a sense of responsibility in offenders.

A fit sentence is one that is proportionate to the gravity of the offence and to the degree of responsibility of the offender. The Criminal Code explicitly directs that a fit sentence must focus on the objectives of deterrence and denunciation.

The last step a court must take before deciding whether to consider that any terms of imprisonment it imposes be served consecutively or concurrently is to consider the totality principle.

Pursuant to subsection 718.2(c) of the Criminal Code, a court that imposes consecutive sentences must determine whether the combined sentence is unduly long or harsh. In other words, the totality principle requires courts to determine whether the totality of the sentence adequately reflects the overall gravity of the offender's conduct. Where the court is of the opinion that the combined sentence is unduly long or harsh, it may order that some of the offences be served concurrently instead of consecutively.

● (1550)

However, where the Criminal Code prescribes mandatory consecutive sentences, a court may impose shorter sentences on some or all of the individual offences in order for the combined sentence to be a fit sentence.

This will be the case for the offences of possession of explosives for a criminal organization, the use of a firearm in the commission of an offence, terrorism offences, or criminal organization offences.

In these cases, the Criminal Code requires judges to order the term of imprisonment for these offences be served consecutively to terms of imprisonment imposed for other offences, whether they arise out of the same event or series of events or not.

The proposed amendments clarify and codify the rules regarding the imposition of consecutive and concurrent sentences, which I outlined earlier in my remarks.

The amendments would also require courts to order in certain cases consecutive sentences on offenders who commit certain sexual offences against children. This would be similar to the current requirement of consecutive sentences for offences that I mentioned earlier: terrorism, criminal organization offences, the use of a firearm.

Specifically, the bill proposes that sentences for child pornography offences be served consecutively to any sentence imposed at the same time for a contact child sexual offence.

It also proposes that in cases of multiple victims, sentences imposed at the same time for contact child sexual offences committed against one victim be served consecutively to those imposed for contact child sexual offences against any other victim.

These amendments recognize the increasing tendency of courts to direct that a sentence for possession or making of child pornography be served consecutively to a sentence for a contact child sexual offence, in recognition of the heinous nature of sexual offending against children, especially where the child pornography material is distributed via the Internet.

Furthermore, requiring child sexual offenders to serve sentences imposed for offences committed against different victims consecutively would address the so-called “volume discounts” given to child sexual offenders sentenced at the same time for multiple child sexual offences. This direction is also valid in cases of multiple child sexual offences, especially where there is more than one victim.

These proposed amendments will reinforce the continued efforts of this government to protect children against sexual offences by ensuring that these crimes are denounced, that child predators are deterred, and that every child victim counts.

Government Orders

In closing, I would encourage all members to support these important amendments that seek to protect our most vulnerable members of society, our young children.

• (1555)

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of Justice of the day, the Minister of Finance, for his speech on Bill C-26.

Since 2006, the Conservative government has taken multiple steps to protect children, including implementing through the Safe Streets and Communities Act new mandatory prison sentences for seven existing Criminal Code sexual offences, including assault, assault with a weapon, aggravated assault where the child is under 16 years of age; and making it illegal for anyone to provide sexually explicit material to a child for the purpose of facilitating the commission of an offence against that child; making it illegal to use computers or other means of telecommunications to agree with or make arrangements with another person to commit a sexual offence against a child; strengthening the sex offender registry; increasing the age of protection; putting in place legislation to make the reporting of child pornography by Internet service providers mandatory; and strengthening the sentencing and monitoring of dangerous offenders.

It all sounds good, but the Minister of Justice stated at committee that sexual offences against children had increased 6% over the past two years. Is Bill C-26 an admission of failure on the part of the government to really better protect children?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member referred to my portfolio, which is not that of justice, but finance. As a member of the government and the cabinet, I am very supportive of this bill, as I believe members on the other side of the House are too. Irrespective of the portfolio they are the critic for, we all share the concern about this important issue.

I thank the member for detailing many of the initiatives that we have advanced to protect our children, the most vulnerable members of our society. This is a demonstration of the importance with which we take this matter and an indication that we do not just talk the talk, but walk the walk as well.

Unfortunately, the nature of cyberbullying and sexual offences is such that the challenge is becoming ever greater, so we have to respond. What we have done is very positive. What we have done was needed. What we have done was right, just, and appropriate, and it is protective of children. But it is clear that we have to do more. That is the purpose of this bill.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to pose a question to the Minister of Finance on this bill. Although he may not believe it, it is probably he, more than the Minister of Justice, who has a greater capacity to contribute to the goal that we all have of there being fewer victims.

I will tell the House what I mean by this. At committee, we heard from witnesses—and the academic literature is replete with the same conclusion—that mandatory minimum sentences do not work. They do not result in fewer victims.

What we heard at committee is that funding programs for rehabilitation and reintegration do work. One program that we

specifically heard about at committee was circles of support and accountability, where the success rate of eliminating recurrence is 70% to 80%.

My question for the minister is why does the government insist on going back to mandatory minimum sentences to address this problem when we know that they do not work, while at the same time defunding a program that has an 80% success rate?

• (1600)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, the mandatory minimum sentences and the maximum sentences are but a part of the legislation. I would invite the member to read the whole bill. He is focusing on a few sections, but it is important to read the entire bill to get a full understanding of it.

Statistics are a part of the story. The facts that we have had on more sexual offences cry out for tougher sanctions and more practical steps to put tools in the hands of police officers and the courts to help protect children. They cry for innovative solutions that would allow us to put in place a more protective perimeter around children when it comes to protecting their vulnerability. This is all part of a comprehensive approach by our government.

There are some 30 justice initiatives, some of which were raised by the previous member opposite, and many of which are designed to put in jail people who offend against and sexually abuse children, and to put them in jail for a longer time. We think this is in the best interests of our most vulnerable people.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the minister for all the work he has done on this important file and this bill.

Why do the Liberals and the NDP have such a long legacy of focusing on the offender and not the victim? Why are they falsely telling the House that mandatory minimum sentences have no effect when, in fact, they do have a very strong effect?

Can the minister address those important questions about the reasons for the misleading information from the opposition and why they have a legacy of sticking up for the offender and not the victim?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that important question, but I am actually not well placed to answer it. I have been puzzled repeatedly by the fact that no matter what bill we propose to impose fines, penalties and, potentially, prison sentences against people who break the law and commit crimes, there is opposition to that. The opposition members are there to oppose, but not to oppose, one would hope, legislation that is in the public interest. I really cannot understand why, but there is a long record of shame in that regard.

Government Orders

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the finance minister's speech on this particular bill. I want to share a couple of stories from my communities and to ask a question of the Minister of Finance.

I have had two dangerous offenders released into the community. One of them, a sex offender, sadly ended up murdering a very young girl. The second offender who was released last month, James Conway, was actually dropped into the community with several conditions to monitor him in the community. The conditions were similar to those put onto the first sex offender I mentioned. James Conway was arrested after nine days of roaming around the community. Thankfully, he was arrested successfully.

I have heard from the community. Once these individuals are released into the community, there is a lack of funding and monitoring of them.

Since we have the Minister of Finance here, I want to ask him this. Does he have additional funding to monitor these individuals? We had a program called circles of support and accountability. That funding has been cut by the current government. The government also promised more RCMP support for the communities, but that has not been delivered.

My community, my mayors, and my constituents are asking the government and Minister of Finance whether there will be additional funding for the programs that monitor these monsters in our communities.

•(1605)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, as I think the member opposite knows, I cannot comment on individual cases. However, we are taking action in respect to this bill, and have taken action in the past to deal with this issue of released prisoners. Of course, mandatory minimum sentences will help in that regard.

Information would be shared between the national sex offender registry and the Canada Border Services Agency as a result of amendments in the bill.

We will also address concerns about exploitation in respect to those who travel in Canada and abroad. This is very important. The proposed amendments would address concerns about accountability of registered sexual offenders who travel across Canada, for example. They would be required to report all passport and driver's licence numbers and their absence for seven days or more for travel within or outside of Canada for the duration of any trips; any address or location where they are expected to stay; and actual dates that have been planned for trips outside Canada and within Canada. This information would be shared and, of course, it would be shared by law enforcement agencies.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before resuming debate, 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 Thunder Bay—Superior North, Natural Resources.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am tempted to begin my speech in the House on Bill C-26 by pointing

out the latest attempt by the member for Langley to demonize the official opposition and the second opposition party.

Any time we examine a justice bill, whether it is Bill C-26 or any other justice bill, I look carefully at what the bill says. This bill is An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Sex Offender Information Registration Act, to enact the High Risk Child Sex Offender Database Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

I also receive a letter from the Minister of Justice explaining a little about the context of his bill—something I do not always appreciate, but often I do.

In the case of Bill C-26, the main objective is to deter criminals and denounce sexual offences against children. The next step is to examine the bill and see whether that is what the bill actually does.

When I hear the Conservatives say over and over again that we care more about offenders and criminals than we do about victims, I find that rather biased and I take offence to such comments, which add absolutely nothing to the debate.

Obviously we are talking about criminals when we are studying a bill like this. They are the main focus of the bill. Talking about them does not mean that we like them, or support them, or that we are behind them saying, “good job, do it again”, like a bunch of cheerleaders. Not at all.

However, if the government tells me that it is denouncing sexual offences against children in order to deter criminals, then I will look at the bill to see whether that is indeed what the government is doing.

It is rather sad that closure was invoked at second reading stage of such an extremely important and complex file, because we can see from the title of the bill alone that it affects a number of statutes at the same time. It introduces a specific database for offenders who are at risk of reoffending and committing more serious offences than the ones described in the current database.

As I was saying to the Minister of Finance, who was well informed but was perhaps not the person who worked directly on this file, the House has passed many laws regarding sexual offences against children.

In fact, we have to question why, by the Minister of Justice's own admission, there has been a 6% increase in offences in the past two years alone. That still bothers me somewhat because if one of the main objectives of the law is to deter criminals from committing crimes and to report sexual offences against children, there may well be some flaws. I do not want members to tell me that this did not exist before. Minimum sentences did exist.

Bill C-26 does not include any new minimum sentence or any new maximum sentence. All that happened was that the length of the sentences was increased. Both minimum and maximum sentences were increased. Perhaps these types of sentences did not work. In short, we could have done the analysis, but first there was closure in the House, then we went to committee.

Government Orders

I must confess that I was a bit wary in the beginning. We were under the impression that the members sitting on the government benches wanted to work very quickly and take shortcuts. Nevertheless, I admit that we were finally able to call the witnesses that we wanted to hear.

I am not quite so positive when it comes to the amendments. Only the government's amendments were accepted, which is always the case. I think that is unfortunate because one of our amendments was based on the very solid evidence given by a criminology expert.

• (1610)

She told us that the information the government wants to put in the new registry—or high risk sex offender database—that it wants to create and that is mentioned in clause 29 of Bill C-26 might be used to identify some victims. This government claims to be on the victims' side and tells us that we are the mean ones who always side with the criminals.

I presented a very simple amendment but the government decided it was too complicated and unnecessary because the notion was implied. When I studied law at the University of Ottawa I was taught that if it is clear, you spell it out. You write it and that is that. Leaving things open to interpretation is another story. All we were asking was that, “under no circumstances must the information referred to in subsection (1) be used to identify the victims”. The amendment was rejected.

This government likes to introduce all kinds of bills. Sometimes it seems as though it is lacking a plan or a person to make sure that the different bills do not contradict each other or that a bill, like Bill C-13 on cyberbullying, which amended a lot of other laws, is not affected in any way by Bill C-26. Sometimes I wonder whether the government is losing control and losing its way.

We presented a perfectly reasonable amendment, requesting that the minister of justice be required to prepare a report specifying the number of persons whose name has been added to the database and the information specified in paragraphs 5(f) and (g), which have to do with the type of offence. This information could have been interesting to look at with respect to each of these individuals. The amendment stipulated that the minister of justice would have to table the report to each house of Parliament within the first 15 sitting days after the report has been prepared.

Once again, this seems to me like a reasonable amendment. The Conservatives will probably give me the same answer. The answer that was given by the Department of Justice and the Conservatives is that it is a public registry—as if I did not know that. The word itself says it all. Since it is a public registry, it is up to me to find the information I need. Every year, I will have to go and check the registry to find the information. If the government was interested in promoting these things and ensuring that its bills work well, this is the type of work that would normally be done. They want to complicate our lives. That is fine. That is good. We will put that in our pipe and smoke it.

However, that being said, it would have been much simpler to do this the way we are proposing. It could also have been useful for the government, since it could have found some missing information right in this report. The government may well say that the 6%

increase could be due to the fact that the minimum sentences were not yet harsh enough. On this side of the House, we think that the increase is more likely related to the fact that the government does not spend much and, even worse, it is making cuts to programs that are working really well and that have been successful. That is also what experts told us in committee.

As I said before on the radio and here in the House at second reading, it is all well and good to have a registry. We already have one. The person responsible for the registry at the RCMP came and told us in committee that the RCMP is already doing this. When a dangerous person moves into a community, the RCMP informs the people living there. The RCMP does not need the government to keep the public safe. The government created this registry saying that it would formalize what the RCMP is already doing.

I will digress for a moment. When we had the minister's press conference after the Prime Minister's presentation, everyone who talked about Bill C-26 made it sound as though it was the ultimate goal and that it would solve all of the world's problems. Finally, the Deputy Commissioner of the RCMP answered one of my questions and said that it would affect perhaps a dozen cases a year.

• (1615)

That brings us back to reality. The National Sex Offender Registry already exists for such offenders. The additional “high risk” aspect pertains to about a dozen people. One thing is clear, and I am surprised that the Conservative government has not paid more attention to it. In fact, instead of talking in glowing terms about this type of measure, it should instead be worried about the fact that these high risk offenders are in our communities. That worries me a lot. I sometimes feel that this government works a lot harder on paper, with words, because that goes hand in hand with its rhetoric that makes it appear to be tough and to be doing something. However, in reality, when we look at the resources available to the RCMP and police forces to conduct investigations, that is not the case. I shudder when I hear police services say that some types of crime will have to be ignored because combatting terrorism is now the priority. Perhaps the minister was right to specify the criteria for a sentence. Yes, there is rehabilitation, deterrence and all that, but one of the government's main purposes is to protect its citizens. Putting more eggs in one basket than in another is not necessarily good management.

Government Orders

There is nothing real there. As for minimum sentences—that is what the member opposite was talking about—I am of the same mind as a former Supreme Court justice who appeared before us and said, in the context of another justice-related file, that all minimum sentences are not necessarily unconstitutional. It is simply not a tool that should be overused. First of all, and this is very important, even the witnesses who appeared in committee, whether they were victims or people who work with organizations that support victims, told us that minimum sentences were not the issue. If, for the kind of offence and the seriousness of the crime committed, we were to impose the minimum sentences that the Conservatives proposed in Bill C-26, there is a problem somewhere. However, there could be a case that has absolutely nothing to do with the kind of stereotype we have of that kind of offence. Therein lies the problem. We heard it directly from legal experts. To say that we are against minimum sentences for this kind of offence does not mean we are defending criminals.

The fact is that, ultimately, the minimum sentence may not even be imposed by the court, because the court, as a general rule, will give more than that, and that is what we want. Look at the bill dealing with child kidnapping—it was clear from the case law that was brought before the committee that the average sentence exceeded the minimum sentence that the Conservatives wanted to impose.

Basically, this is mostly just smoke and mirrors; however, in some cases, it can lead to some strange outcomes. This is why there are constitutional challenges. With a constitutional challenge, all you need is one case that is flawed, that does not fit the minimum sentence formula, for the provision to be struck down; it will then be sent back here for us to do over again. That is one of the problems.

Obviously, the NDP supported Bill C-26 at second reading. We took our work seriously and sought the extra information we needed, even though the bill is far from perfect and is not necessarily the type of bill we would introduce. I think our analysis would be more thorough. Indeed, offenders need to be punished, but we must also ensure that the people who leave prison are not a danger to the public. Earlier, the Liberal member mentioned the circles of change program. In committee we learned that the program had a 70% to 80% success rate. Who would scoff at that? None other than the Conservative government, because it does not want to talk about that type of thing.

● (1620)

The government just wants to talk about things that create the impression that it is dealing with criminals. Of course, we are all against criminals.

When I return to my riding at the end of the day and talk to the people of Gatineau, because I like to connect with my community, I tell them I am proud of the work we did that week. In this case, we passed a victims bill of rights and we worked on a bill to deal with sexual predators. I would just like to add, for once in my life, that I am sure that this will be useful.

In any case, I can tell them I tried very hard in committee to have the government listen to reason, not to defend criminals, but to ensure that the bill will withstand the constitutional challenges that

will test it in the coming years, that it is consistent with other bills, and that it achieves its objectives.

The government claims to be helping victims with the victims bill of rights, but they need real rights, as I said in my speech. The right to lodge a complaint cannot be hypothetical. The government brings in minimum penalties but it is cutting resources for police officers—the ones who catch criminals and bring them to justice. The justice system is crying for help, and we are in need of judges and crown prosecutors. How does this make any sense?

I weep for victims because they will never get the services they need. That will not change, even in one, two or three years. What is even sadder is that they will have been promised the world. It is even more disappointing when they are told that something will be fixed.

As for the registry, people from the RCMP have told us that they already have a hard time keeping criminal cases and criminal records up to date. The member for Langley presented a petition earlier regarding impaired driving. I agree that we still have a long way to go. When we hear in the papers that someone was convicted for the sixth time, we have to wonder how that can be possible. However, these situations happen because nothing is written in the records of these repeat offenders, even though everyone knows that they have been to court six times and that this is not their first conviction.

Civil and criminal justice need to be consistent. There needs to be some follow-up. The bill gives the governor in council the power to make regulations by establishing the criteria for determining whether a person who is found guilty of a sexual offence against a child poses a high risk of committing a crime of a sexual nature; and, in subclause (b), by prescribing anything that is to be prescribed by this act. This means that this legislation retains some harmful legal grey areas.

This is moving too fast even for the people at the Department of Justice. I asked them what impact Bill S-2 would have. People like me who follow justice issues know that this was the bill concerning statutory instruments and how to enact regulations. We all know that a law is one thing, but that three-quarters of the obligations are set out in the regulations.

When the government tells us that the Governor in Council, namely cabinet, will be establishing the criteria, that tells us who is going to be making the decisions and that we will not know exactly when and how those decisions will be made. I asked them whether Bill S-2 would apply since we are talking about delegation and regulation by reference. That means that we would not even have a separate list of criteria. The answer that I got from the expert at the Department of Justice was that he did not know and that he would check.

● (1625)

That means that the government is not making connections between its various bills. I got an answer today, just a few hours before I rose in the House for the debate, and I was told that, yes, Bill S-2 would apply.

Government Orders

There are ramifications, and I get the impression that we will be forced to revisit many of these bills. However, as it now stands, Bill C-26 is unfortunately a lot of talk, just like the Canadian victims bill of rights. As one of the victims, Mr. Gilhooly, so aptly stated, even if the bill were passed as it stands, it would not change what he experienced in any way.

Once again, the government is misleading victims by giving them the impression that it is tough on crime and imposing law and order, but in the end, the law will not be enforced.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member across the way. She definitely is passionate. She is bright. She is a lawyer, and that is not an insult. However, she said a lot.

To summarize, she said that the government has promised a lot. That is true. We have promised to make Canada safer. We have one of the best judicial systems in the world, but it needs to be improved, and that is what Bill C-26 does. She said we are doing a lot, and she is correct. We are doing a lot to make sure we have kept our promises.

One of the key parts of Bill C-26 is to hold offenders to account and to protect the victims. If offenders reoffend during their warrant period, should the sentence for that offence be served concurrently or consecutively? Should it be at the same time they are serving their initial sentence, or should it be added on?

There is another question on concurrent and consecutive sentences in the case of multiple victims. If victim number one was sexually assaulted and then victim number 2, at a different time, was also sexually assaulted, and then victim number 3 was sexually assaulted, would those be three convictions? If there were three convictions, would those sentences be served all at the same time by that person, or should the sentences be consecutive and be served one after another?

I think Canadians want them served one after another. I would ask for the ideology of the NDP on that issue.

• (1630)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, we are supporting Bill C-26, so I think that speaks volumes to those factors.

The Conservatives talk a lot about consecutive sentencing. The Minister of Finance talked about it also, but I would submit that in the same way the charter of victims rights has been conceived—with a lot of “could”, “might”, and so on—it would still be left to the discretion of the court. I believe that a crime should be punished according to what the crime is.

[*Translation*]

I have practised labour law my entire life. Thank goodness it is not about crime and it is not the same thing. However, when someone is fired or is brought before a disciplinary board, the same principle has always been applied, and this is the same societal principle that we apply to criminals: the person who commits a crime must pay. However, if their crime is stealing a chocolate bar from a corner store, they will not be put in prison for 10 years, as would the fellow

who goes to a bank with a shotgun and waves it in the teller's face. It is all relative. That is how our system works.

The government talks a lot about consecutive sentences, but that is at the court's discretion. That suits the NDP. That is the principle to be retained. However, they should stop talking as if consecutive sentences were automatic because victims are being misled if they are led to believe that, as of now, all sentences will be consecutive. That is not true. There is the principle of totality, according to Mr. Gilhooly, who is a victim. Consecutive sentences will not work because of this principle. People have to stop spouting nonsense.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for my colleague, who is a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

She worked very hard during the study of this bill. She proposed some amendments, but they were all rejected. She talked about two of those amendments.

I wonder if she could tell us about the process for proposing amendments in committee and how the government reacted in response to those amendments and all that work.

I doubt that everyone understands the process and the fact that there is no real discussion on the value of each amendment. The member also talked a bit about the circles program. I listened carefully to earlier debates, today's debates and debates in committee. We never received a proper explanation, either here in the House or in committee, as to why cuts were made to that program.

Does the member know why? Does she have any more information about the cuts than what we have before us now?

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I will begin by answering the first question about the process in committee and the amendment stage. My colleague also proposed an amendment that made sense to me. It seemed well-thought-out and logical given what we had heard. Once again, the government flat out said no. It is all very sad.

When NDP members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights make speeches, they do not get sheets of paper telling them to say this or that, unless a colleague wants to help out and has a great idea. We are rather autonomous. I imagine the same goes for my Liberal colleague. He is going to give his speech a little later. He will surely figure it out for himself.

To hear the Conservative backbenchers, we get the impression that they do not get much of a say. They seem to be run by some tiresome remote control. I thought that being a member of a committee meant doing this work for our colleagues in the House: coming back after report stage and reporting on what all of us, from all parties, heard and what we think.

On the matter of the circles program, unfortunately, the answer will be brief. It is sad because we had with us the Minister of Finance who holds the purse strings. If he really believes in Bill C-26, then he needs to allocate a bit more money.

Unfortunately, justice is the poor cousin. If we do not have social justice in the country, then that is pretty pathetic.

Government Orders

•(1635)

[*English*]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is up my alley because I worked for probation and parole for 13 years, and my daughter Mindy is a correctional worker at the Brampton youth correctional centre.

One of the questions that was posed a while ago was about whether sentences should be concurrent or consecutive. I can say that the government and Parliament have a responsibility to ensure that the Criminal Code is clear about what an offence constitutes, but at the end of the day it will be a decision by a judge that will determine whether or not that sentence should be consecutive or concurrent, based on the assessment, the pre-sentence reports, the pre-disposition reports, and whether the offender is an adult or a youth.

As well, it is a bit rich that we are studying a bill about sexual offences right now when the government did not spend the \$10 million of funds that were earmarked for the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre. Maybe my colleague can elaborate on that.

The other thing that I would like the member to elaborate on is the importance of prevention and rehabilitation and how that can help us as a society and ensure that we will all be safe at the end of the day.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her questions, which could well be the topic of a dissertation.

It is disgraceful that the \$10 million in question was not spent, since that money was supposed to be used to provide direct assistance to victims. The Conservatives often say that we on this side of the House do not care about victims. Nevertheless, we are talking about many programs that have proven their worth. They do not cost much, but they provide really good value for money. It seems to me that the Conservatives are completely missing the mark on this.

I would also like to thank my colleague for asking a question about prevention. Asking that question has nothing to do with favouring criminals over victims. On the contrary, I would not want any repeat offenders to be allowed to reintegrate into the community. I am not proud to say that such a registry will be created to inform me of the presence of dangerous people in my community. I would prefer that those people not be in my community. We need to work on that. We have to help the people who can be rehabilitated by using programs that have proven their worth. We need to think about other measures to deal with those who cannot be saved.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-26, the tougher penalties for child predators act.

Protecting children from predators is a Liberal priority, as I am sure it is a priority of everyone in the House. For that reason, we will support the bill, though in many respects we view it as a missed opportunity from a policy perspective. I want to be clear. Sexual

violence is traumatic and devastating at any age, but even more so for children.

The attempt of criminal sentencing to in some way quantify the impact of sexual violence is a failure from the outset. As with all violent crime, no criminal sentence or civil remedy can undo the wrong that has occurred, though we would hope that healing is possible for every victim.

However, the law can only deliver an imperfect measure of justice. No, consecutive sentence, increased maximum penalty, no order for damages can undo the actions that society would justly have offenders repay.

The hearts of everyone in the House, including my colleagues on the justice committee, go out to the victims of childhood sexual offences. The testimony of victims we heard at committee was gut-wrenching and, frankly, at times difficult to listen to.

I want to say for the record that I was particularly struck by the testimony of Mr. Greg Gilhooly, a victim of the terrible crimes of Graham James. Mr. Sheldon Kennedy also appeared by teleconference, but unfortunately we experienced some technical difficulties into his testimony. In any case, I would like to commend both of them for assisting the committee with its work, along with Mr. Alain Fortier and Mr. Frank Tremblay of *Victimes d'agressions sexuelles au masculin*. Their bravery in going on the public record for the benefit of Canadian society is truly admirable and most appreciated.

As to the purpose of Bill C-26, Liberals support the policy objectives of reducing sexual offences against children, denouncing such heinous acts when they occur and separating offenders from society where necessary. However, from the Liberal perspective, the bill should have focused more on reducing crimes in the first place, rather than on punishing offenders once a child had been victimized.

In our committee over the past year we have talked a lot about victims, and rightly so, but we should put more focus on having fewer victims to talk about. Reducing rates of child sexual crime will require making meaningful fiscal commitments instead of these repeated changes to the Criminal Code.

Liberals believe it is crucial for criminal justice policy to be evidence-based. That belief is at the core of our support for the charter, which requires our courts to weigh a law's intended purposes against its actual effects in real life. Unfortunately, the bill is largely a missed opportunity when it comes to reducing sexual offences against children.

As we heard at committee, the data shows that a reduction in the incidence of these crimes would require investing in rehabilitation programs. Instead, we heard that the Conservatives had cut programs that successfully achieved reductions.

In addition, some provisions in Bill C-26 that reduce judicial discretion are problematic, though not fatal to our support for the bill. I will explain these conclusions in a minute. However, I would like to go over the provisions of Bill C-26 for the benefit of the House.

Government Orders

Bill C-26 seeks to amend the Criminal Code to increase mandatory minimum and maximum penalties for certain sexual offences against children, including sexual assaults and offences related to child pornography.

Bill C-26 would also increase the maximum penalties for violations of various court orders, including probation orders, peace bonds and so forth. In addition, it would amend the Canada Evidence Act to ensure that the spouses of the accused would be competent and compellable witnesses for the prosecution in child pornography cases.

The bill would also amend the Sex Offender Information Registration Act to increase the reporting obligations of sex offenders who travelled outside of Canada.

• (1640)

Finally, Bill C-26 would enact the high risk child sex offender database act to establish a public-accessible federal database that contains an amalgamation of already public information with respect to high-risk sex offenders.

I want to say a few words about rehabilitation, which I know is a principle of sentencing that the government prefers to ignore. However, from a public policy perspective, it is absolutely crucial. I say that not because anybody wants to put support for offenders above support for victims, but because we want to have fewer victims.

Some in this chamber may recall that at second reading I expressed considerable skepticism about the bill before us. After all, in 2012, many of the criminal provisions in Bill C-26 were amended in Bill C-10 to create or increase minimum penalties or to increase maximums. Since Bill C-10 came into force, the Minister of Justice, as repeated again today by the Minister of Finance, indicated that child sexual offences had risen by 6%. Therefore, it serves to reason that either Bill C-10 was ineffective at reducing the number of offences or that the government is again increasing penalties, without waiting to see whether Bill C-10 was effective.

I understand that maybe the focus here is denunciation and separating offenders from society, but I would plainly ask, why are we not doing more on prevention? Why is reduction not our central policy focus when it comes to child sex offences or at least worthy of equal focus to denunciation and separation from society?

Liberals will support the bill, but we would like a direct answer to this question from the government. Where is the prevention?

I would like to draw the government's attention to some specific testimony from the committee. We heard from two representatives from an organization, which was discussed earlier in debate, called Circles of Support and Accountability, or COSA.

COSA is a community-based reintegration group that holds sexual offenders accountable for the harm they have caused, while assisting with their re-entry into society at the end of their sentences. COSA was started by the Mennonite Central Committee, and there are chapters across the country.

At committee, we heard about the organization's remarkable success at reducing recidivism. Specifically, research indicates that

offenders involved with COSA have a reduction of sexual recidivism of 70% to 80% compared to those who are not. The program is also very cost effective. For example, the annual budget in Ottawa, which would work with about 8 to 12 offenders a year, is less than the cost to incarcerate one offender in the federal system for a year.

COSA had been receiving \$2.2 million in government money annually for two decades. However, the government ended that funding, which in Ontario, for example, supported 70% of its operations.

From a public policy perspective, how does it make sense to tinker with the Criminal Code, while defunding programs that are proven to reduce recidivism by 70% to 80%? Think of how many fewer victims that means, or maybe do not, because it is too heartbreaking.

Also on this point of prevention, speaking about the proposed federal sex offender registry, the Privacy Commissioner, Mr. Daniel Therrien, told the committee:

—evaluations that have been done based on the experience in the United States suggest that there is little or no evidence that registration and notification laws are effective, either in terms of deterring sex offender recidivism or in reducing reported sex offences.

Any government's time and money are limited resources. Is Bill C-26 an efficient allocation of those resources to serve the worthy objective of reducing child sexual offences? Again, I repeat, it is a missed opportunity.

• (1645)

I also want to mention that it remains my view, and the view of the Liberal Party, that some of these changes inappropriately remove judicial discretion from the sentencing process. Perhaps Conservatives look at these changes and think, "Great, higher sentences across the board".

However, a key point that gets missed here is that discretion is not eliminated. It is simply downloaded to law enforcement and prosecutors. The result, in some instances, might be that we see no charge where we would currently see a relatively minor or moderate charge, because a new mandatory minimum would make an appropriate outcome impossible. Dr. Stacey Hannem, the chair of the policy review committee of the Canadian Criminal Justice Association, drew our attention to the particular problem of eliminating summary offence options.

Government Orders

In any event, I want to reiterate that Liberals will support this bill, because we indeed support the denunciation of child sexual offences and separating offenders from society where necessary. None of my criticisms of this bill detract from the gravity of these types of crimes. However, their gravity is why I wish the government would do more to prevent these crimes in the first place, rather than focusing exclusively on dealing with their consequences.

As I said, this is a missed opportunity to prioritize the prevention of these intolerable crimes.

• (1650)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we start questions and comments, I just wanted to indicate to hon. members that I know that this is an important and complex question. However, I do notice that in the period allowed for questions and comments, even when it is 10 minutes, we have scarcely been getting three interventions into that 10 minutes.

I am appealing to hon. members, for their colleagues who may wish to participate in that period, to the extent members can, to keep those interventions as brief and as succinct as they can.

The hon. member for Gatineau.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I take the message to heart. I know that I am one of the guilty people on that front.

[*Translation*]

The question that I would like to ask my colleague, who is the Liberal justice critic, is as follows.

We spoke about the work that was done in committee. In committee, I was concerned about the only two amendments that the government accepted. They were presented as technical amendments, but in the end, people from the department said that those amendments actually addressed fundamental errors and omissions.

This is the second bill where the government has introduced new provisions and new topics that were not examined by the committee on the very day that we were studying the bill clause by clause. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

What she mentioned is exactly what happened a few times in committee. Unfortunately this shows a lack of respect for those participating in the committee. It would absolutely have been possible to present these amendments and to discuss them with the witnesses during the study in committee.

The fact that these amendments were received after all of the testimony, during the clause-by-clause study, was unfair and truly showed a lack of respect for all of the participants, who are there to try to improve the bill. That is what I think. There is no problem with presenting amendments like that at the last minute. However, when the government knows about an amendment, it should present it as soon as possible. It is best to discuss these amendments with the witnesses.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Charlottetown for his intervention on this bill this afternoon, and I want to thank the members of the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party for indicating their support for this bill. It is an important bill.

I am the father of two daughters, 15 and 11, and God forbid that anything should ever happen to them in any way that would be covered under this kind of legislation.

One of the reasons this bill is before the House is that we have seen many instances when this type of criminal conduct has not been taken seriously by the courts. The name of this bill is the “tougher penalties for child predators act”. It speaks for itself.

I want to ask the member if he believes that in the past we have seen lenient and unacceptable sentences. Does he believe that victims have not always been fully respected by the courts? Does he agree that this bill is designed to do just that?

• (1655)

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, it strikes me as passing strange that we have a question that would indicate a lack of faith in the judiciary when it comes to imposing sentences in criminal matters, when over the last few days, we have heard that it is only members of the judiciary, and not parliamentarians, who are the appropriate ones to oversee national security in this country.

My answer for my colleague would be that very capable people are appointed to the bench. We trust judges, and judges should have discretion. That discretion should not be unduly fettered in the manner it has been. It results in a whole panoply of unintended consequences, mostly at the lower range of the scale. It does not result in our having fewer victims, and that should be our focus.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague for his speech, once again. He shows the distinction in his background as a career lawyer. However, I want to go back to the notion of mandatory minimum sentences.

My colleague now knows this. In the United States, there is a bipartisan effort among Republicans and Democrats to do away with mandatory minimum sentences, because the Americans have decided in Congress that they are not working. Whether it is in Texas, California, or New Jersey, there is a movement to do away with them, because they are extremely expensive. As the Americans like to say now, mandatory minimum sentences are all about being dumb on crime and tough on taxpayers.

I would like to ask my colleague to comment a bit more on the fact that these mandatory minimums the government is shoving down the throats of judges are not working. Also, could he just help us understand why it is that the director of criminal law policy at Justice Canada, Mr. David Daubney, who was a Conservative member of Parliament before moving on to that distinguished career, held a press conference just before his retirement two years ago and slammed the Conservatives for not listening to the evidence or the good work being provided by the criminal law policy unit at Justice Canada?

Government Orders

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I know that you wanted the questions and answers to be short, but indeed, a 20-minute dissertation would not be time enough to point out all of the weaknesses of mandatory minimum sentences. Allow me to give the House the *Coles Notes*.

The academic research and the testimony at committee were unanimous that mandatory minimum sentences do not deter crime. They contribute to prison overcrowding. They discriminate disproportionately against aboriginal Canadians. They are an unjustified attack on judicial discretion. They do not eliminate discretion at all, but as I indicated in my remarks, simply pass it down to the prosecutorial and police-enforcement level, and they are a waste of taxpayers' dollars. That is the *Coles Notes*.

We need to be seeking more upstream solutions. Our goal should be for there to be fewer victims. Mandatory minimum sentences do not work. The members opposite would not be able to point to a single study that contradicts that. The evidence is absolutely uncontradicted. Upstream solutions is where we should be.

The answers are not in legislative measures. They are not in tinkering with the Criminal Code. The answers are in making investments on the front end in things like poverty reduction and mental health and addiction services. Also, I cannot stress enough the wrong-headed move by the government to cut the rehabilitation and reintegration program, Circles of Support and Accountability, which it has been shown works with a success rate of 70% to 80%. Those are the answers, not mandatory minimum sentences.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I find myself in complete agreement with the hon. member for Charlottetown. The only difference is that I feel so strongly that mandatory minimums are the wrong way to go and unconstitutional that I probably will vote against this bill. As much as I want to do whatever it takes to protect children from child predators, I do not see that this bill is going to be effective.

I would love to hear more from the member for Charlottetown as to what he sees as those upstream solutions. What more could we be doing in prevention? As a mother and grandmother, I cannot find words adequate to express my contempt and loathing for anyone who commits these kinds of crimes. We want to protect our children. What is the best way?

• (1700)

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, the answers lie in social programs that are designed to address the root causes for many of the troubled individuals who find themselves in conflict with the criminal justice system. We have seen those social programs under attack and falling at the altar of the obsession with balancing the budget. They include things like mental health and addictions. They include things like poverty reduction. All these sorts of programs require a collaborative approach with stakeholders within communities, and indeed with provincial governments, because there is absolutely an overlap.

That is why I believe it is so difficult for the government to make a serious investment in upstream solutions. As Kyle Kirkup said, if you have a complex social problem, we have a prison for that. Anything that is nuanced, sophisticated, a bit complex, or cannot be fixed with an amendment to the Criminal Code seems to be, sadly, beyond the government's comprehension.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would compliment hon. members. On such a topic, we got in four interventions in 10 minutes. That was much better.

* * *

RESPECT FOR COMMUNITIES ACT

BILL C-2—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 an agreement has not been reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) concerning the proceedings at report stage and third reading of Bill C-2, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances 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 those stages.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I am sure that the House appreciates the notice from the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

* * *

[*English*]

TOUGHER PENALTIES FOR CHILD PREDATORS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Sex Offender Information Registration Act, to enact the High Risk Child Sex Offender Database Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the articulate and passionate member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Before I begin my official remarks, I would like to say I have never seen an upstream solution or a social program that can cure a pedophile. That is absolutely ridiculous. I have spent 18 years as an educator, over 10 of those as a school principal, and I have seen the victims of child predators. I have seen the victims of pedophilia, and no slap on the wrist, no upstream solution, no social program is going to stop them from violating the rights of our most precious commodity, our children. When they are sitting in a prison cell, predators cannot and will not molest a child. That is the solution for pedophilia in this country.

Government Orders

I am pleased to voice my support for Bill C-26, the tougher penalties for child predators act, during third reading debate. Bill C-26 would significantly strengthen our approach to addressing sexual offending against children. The proposed reforms are targeted at deterring these heinous crimes; ensuring that offenders are held accountable for the harm they cause to the most vulnerable members of our society; and enhancing our ability to monitor these offenders to assist in preventing recidivism.

We know that children are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. In fact, children represent the majority of all police reported sexual assault victims, and 55% of all police reported sexual assault victims in 2012 were children. It is shocking. Moreover, recent increases in police reported sexual offences are of particular concern. In 2013, they increased by 5% from the previous year, in contrast with the decline in recent years of violent crime generally. This is a higher rate than the two previous years in 2012 and 2013, which each saw a 3% increase. So this is a growing problem.

What are these numbers telling us? In my view the message is clear: we need to do more as a society to protect our children from this harm. That is precisely why Bill C-26 builds on recent reforms enacted by the Safe Streets and Communities Act in 2012, including increasing mandatory minimum penalties and maximum penalties for certain child sexual offences.

Recent jurisprudence reflects the importance of these types of reforms. Judicial consideration of denunciation and deterrence and the imposition of lengthier sentences for child sexual offences have increased following passage of the Safe Streets and Communities Act. These reforms strengthen penalties for child sexual offences. Judges are taking note of Parliament's efforts to recognize the seriousness of these types of offences.

Specifically, the British Columbia Court of Appeal noted: "Parliament has made it very clear that the protection of children is a basic value of Canadian society which the courts must defend". The Ontario Court of Appeal has also commented on this important legislative objective. That court noted: "...recent amendments to the Criminal Code and decisions of this court have signalled a determination to address, in a more powerful and effective fashion, the need to denounce and deter crimes that involve the sexual victimization of children."

I believe these are objectives that we can and should support, and they are clearly reflected in Bill C-26's proposed reforms. They are also supported by clear statements of principle contained in the Criminal Code. Section 718.01 clarifies that primary consideration should be given to the principles of denunciation and deterrence when a court imposes a sentence for an offence that involved the abuse of a child. In these cases, the protection of children from those who might harm them is the single most important factor.

Bill C-26's proposal to increase minimum mandatory penalties for these types of offences is entirely consistent with those objectives. In fact, they further those objectives. The application of minimum mandatory penalties to child sexual offences is not new. We now have experience in this regard. For example, Mr. David Butt, who testified before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, noted in respect of minimum mandatory penalties:

...the sky has not fallen, in the sense that we still have responsible sentences; we still have a realistic opportunity to present in a sentencing hearing where the appropriate sentence should fall in the range. This is not eviscerated judicial discretion; it has simply moved the floor.

We have to ask ourselves whether it is appropriate to move the floor.

Mr. David Butt, the legal counsel for the Kids Internet Safety Alliance, made those comments on February 4, 2015.

● (1705)

The answer to Mr. Butt's question regarding minimum mandatory penalties for child sexual offences is an unequivocal yes. I agree that minimum mandatory penalties recognize an appropriate level of moral opprobrium, as he stated, for child sexual offences. Furthermore, I am convinced that these types of sentencing measures contribute significantly to the realization of the Criminal Code's important objectives of denunciation and deterrence with respect to child sexual offences.

These are the reasons why Bill C-26 proposes further penalty increases for child sexual offences, as well as mandatory consecutive sentences where offenders are sentenced at the same time for contact child sexual offences and child pornography offences, or for contact child offences against multiple victims. This is another critical aspect of Bill C-26.

I will be clear. Bill C-26's consecutive sentencing reforms mean that sentencing judges must impose consecutive sentences in these cases, regardless of the totality principle, which maintains that the total length of sentences ordered to be served consecutively should not be unduly long or harsh. Judges would be specifically directed to impose a sentence for each conviction and order that they be served consecutively. This would respect each individual victim.

Importantly, these reforms would ensure that the harm done to each child victim is recognized specifically. There would be no more sentence discounts for offenders who are sentenced for multiple offences against multiple victims at the same time. Bill C-26 is clear on this point: offenders must be, and I repeat, must be held accountable for each and every victim they have harmed.

Recent sentencing cases demonstrate the importance of these reforms. Now, although courts have generally been imposing consecutive sentences in cases where offenders are sentenced at the same time for contact child sexual offences and child pornography offences, often in recognition of the additional harm caused when material is distributed via the Internet, the approach to cases involving convictions for offences against multiple victims is much more inconsistent.

Government Orders

We are seeing judges impose concurrent sentences for offences committed against different child victims. I am concerned that such an approach to sentencing might be seen by some pedophiles, in some sort of perverse way, as an incentive to actually violate the rights of multiple victims. Of course, that is not the intention of sentencing. However, we are concerned about the effect of a particular law or practice, not its intention. Certainly, it could not be said that the practice of imposing concurrent sentences in these types of cases serves the important objectives of denunciation and deterrence, which are enshrined in the Criminal Code itself.

These reforms are clearly needed. The victims who testified before the committee on justice and human rights were very clear on this point. However, Bill C-26's sentencing reforms would not stop there. The bill would increase these penalties for breaches of supervision orders, which could be imposed to prevent future offending. The breach of a condition included in such an order is a factor indicating that the offender is at risk of offending again. Therefore, it is critical that penalties for breaches of such orders act as a deterrent.

Accordingly, Bill C-26 would ensure that anyone convicted of breaching a probation order, peace bond, or a prohibition order would be subject to a maximum penalty of 18 months on summary conviction, rather than the existing 6 months, and 4 years on indictment, rather than the existing 2 years.

I have focused on Bill C-26's proposed sentencing reforms, but the bill proposes other important reforms that would assist in ensuring that the evidence of an accused's spouse is available in child pornography prosecutions. Information could be shared between Canada and foreign countries concerning Canadians and permanent residents of Canada who may travel abroad to sexually offend against children. Moreover, the public would be informed of high-risk offenders who might offend against our children.

I see that my time is running out. I will stop there and pick it up in questions and comments.

• (1710)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to a good part of the member's speech in highlighting the current government's agenda when it comes to crime and, loosely, the concept of justice.

What we have seen, not just in this bill but also in a series of other bills in this area, is problematic doublespeak. The government claims to be committed to fighting child sexual offences. It seems committed to throwing people in jail. Yet, we know that over a five-year period, the RCMP withheld some \$10 million in funds earmarked for its National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre. The cuts, made partly as an RCMP contribution to the government's deficit reduction action plan, have occurred even as the number of child exploitation tips from the public increases exponentially.

We are hearing from government members that they are taking tough action, and yet we know that the RCMP itself did not spend the money allocated, and instead returned it to government coffers so that the government could make it work, supposedly.

I would like to ask what this doublespeak is all about and why this took place.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, these funds were intended to support very difficult and challenging jobs. If we cannot find people who are qualified or capable of delivering those services, we do not want to spend the money on people who cannot do the job or are not qualified to do it. We have to find qualified, trained people.

This is an opposition distraction technique to try to distract from the fact that they do not really support mandatory minimum penalties for people who commit child sexual offences. As I said at the beginning of my speech, there is no social program, no upstream solution, that can stop pedophiles from committing sexual offences against children. This is an absolute fact. We need to put policies, laws, and penalties in place that would actually protect our children.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there actually is a program. It is called circles of support and accountability. It has a 70% to 80% success rate.

My question relates to a comment made early in the speech where the hon. member said that the measures in Bill C-26 build on those taken in Bill C-10. He is right. In Bill C-10 there were several instances where mandatory minimum penalties were increased, and they were increased again in Bill C-26. What happened between the introduction of the mandatory minimums in Bill C-10 and the increase in those mandatory minimums in Bill C-26 was that the rates of these types of crimes went up.

I believe it was Albert Einstein who said the "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results". Could the member explain why we are re-increasing mandatory minimums when the ones that were increased in Bill C-10 did not work?

• (1715)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, it is a bizarre argument that an increase in mandatory minimum penalties could work to increase the amount of violence against children. That is ridiculous.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, no pedophile can violate the rights of, or commit a sexual crime against, a child if they are incarcerated. We know that many of these criminals violate children over and over again. This is not something that is easily cured. Therefore, we need to make sure that the rights of the victim are protected here. We need to make sure that children are protected in Canada, and mandatory minimum sentences that are consecutively served will do just that.

Government Orders

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-26, the tougher penalties for child predators act, now at third reading. This is a critical piece of legislation and we should all support its important objectives.

Bill C-26 would strengthen our existing approach to protecting children from sexual predators by building on numerous recent initiatives in that regard.

I am pleased that our government has implemented a number of important initiatives, including raising the age of consent to sexual activity, also known as the age of protection, from 14-years to 16-years; requiring those who provide Internet services to the public to report when they are advised of an Internet address where child pornography may be available to the public; requiring all of those convicted of sexual offences abroad to report to a police service within seven days of arriving in Canada; and creating two new offences prohibiting anyone from providing sexually explicit material to a child for the purpose of facilitating the commission of a sexual offence against the child, and prohibiting anyone from using any means of telecommunications, including the Internet, to agree or make arrangements with another person for the purpose of committing a sexual offence against a child. Those are just to name a few.

Unquestionably, our government has worked hard to protect children from sexual predators and it continues to do so, as is currently reflected in Bill C-26's proposed reforms. Our children deserve no less.

Available statistics paint a disturbing picture of sexual offences against children, both at home and abroad. Sadly, this type of offence has been facilitated by the Internet, which may play a role in the recent increases in police-reported child sexual offences.

The most recent statistics indicate a 6% increase in 2013 as compared to 2012. This includes a 30% increase in police-reported incidents of luring a child via a computer, an 11% increase in police-reported incidents of sexual exploitation, and a 21% increase in police-reported incidents of child pornography offences.

Furthermore, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, which operates cybertip.ca, Canada's tip line for reporting online sexual exploitation of children, provided the committee on justice and human rights with data that also caused deep concern.

Specifically, it has received 125,000 reports from the public since 2004, when cybertip.ca was launched. The majority of these reports related to images that are online and that depict children being sexually abused.

The centre noted that in the 2014-15 fiscal year alone, its child protection analysts assessed and categorized over 6,000 images of child pornography. Disturbingly, 69% of these images depicted children that were under the age of 12.

These numbers are telling us that more must be done. Bill C-26 would do just that.

First, it would increase penalties for certain child sexual offences, including child pornography, which has become a global scourge, as the statistics clearly show. Child pornography does not just harm the

children who are abused in the images, it harms all children by sending the abhorrent message that it is acceptable for adults to use children for their own sexual gratification.

● (1720)

To better denounce and deter this crime, Bill C-26 would increase both mandatory minimum and maximum penalties for possessing and accessing child pornography. Moreover, Bill C-26 would make the most serious child pornography offences, making and distributing child pornography, strictly indictable with a mandatory minimum penalty of one year and a maximum penalty of 14 years. This is to reflect the severity of these crimes and the harmful impact they have on children.

The Supreme Court of Canada has commented on the pervasive nature of the harm caused by this type of offending in its 2008 L.M. decision. It said:

Finally, I note that L.M. disseminated his pornography around the world over the Internet. The use of this medium can have serious consequences for a victim. Once a photograph has been posted on the Web, it can be accessed indefinitely, from anywhere in the world. [The victim] will never know whether a pornographic photograph or video in which she appears might not resurface someday.

In addition to its proposed penalty increases, Bill C-26 would also require judges to impose consecutive sentences in cases where offenders are sentenced at the same time for contact child sexual offences and child pornography offences, and where offenders are sentenced at the same time for contact child sexual offences against multiple victims. No more sentence discounts for prolific child sex offenders. Every victim matters.

These are some of the bill's critical messages that serve the important objectives of denunciation and deterrence, which, as our Criminal Code apparently clarifies, are paramount in cases involving the abuse of a child.

That is not all. Bill C-26 also proposes to increase the maximum penalties for breaches of supervision orders, which impose conditions on suspected or convicted offenders, and are intended to prevent offending and protect children. We cannot ignore the fact that all breaches of such orders indicate a risk to children. That is why it is imperative that offenders are held accountable for breaching conditions imposed to protect children.

In a similar vein, Bill C-26 would also ensure that evidence of an offence committed while the offender was subject to a conditional sentence order, on parole, or on statutory release, would be considered an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes.

Offenders who reoffend, while subject to conditions imposed to protect those they have harmed, should be held to account, not just for the new offence but also for their violation of the conditions themselves. This is the appropriate way to effectively denounce violations of such conditions.

I am the father of two daughters, 15 and 11 years old, and thank God this kind of thing has not ever happened to them. I could not even imagine going through that as a parent and I could not even imagine what that would do them.

Government Orders

I believe these measures, in addition to the proposed new high risk child sex offender database also proposed in Bill C-26, address the dangers and risks posed by child sexual offenders.

• (1725)

I trust that these reforms will get support from all members of this House. I know that all members of Parliament are committed to protecting children from harm. Toward that end, I urge all honourable members to join me in support of this important legislation.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that this is a serious issue and discussion we are having. I do not think, nor would I hope, that there is anybody in this House who does not support the fact that we need to ensure the safety of young children or any victim when it comes to sexual exploitation or sexual assaults. However, we need to ensure that we invest our money wisely. We can make all the laws we want and change all the legislation we want, but without the proper resources it would not amount to anything.

In a previous intervention, the member's colleague said that sex offenders cannot be rehabilitated. My question is geared toward the prevention and rehabilitation piece because on the government's website it states that research shows that treating sex offenders does make a difference.

Does the hon. member support his previous colleague's comments that a sex offender cannot be rehabilitated? Does he not believe that if we invest in prevention and rehabilitation, we would help build a safer society?

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague from Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing has had a long history in the criminal justice system prior to being elected in this place. I respect the work that she and her colleagues have done, particularly within the prison system.

We know that quite a lot of resources are expended within our prison system on the rehabilitation of individuals who are in prison. For some offenders rehabilitation does work, but for many it does not. We do our best, we try, but there are some individuals who just cannot be rehabilitated.

The recidivism rate for these individuals is high once they are released. The whole idea is to ensure that the people who are committing this kind of serious, heinous crime on children spend a maximum amount of time in prison where they can certainly access to rehabilitation services.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would never, in any fashion, attempt to defend these types of hideous crimes that take place. They are abhorrent and we want to do what we can as a society to prevent them from taking place in the first place.

The question I have is not that far off in terms of the issue of resources. The government has come forward with legislation to show that it is getting tough on crime. However, I was just on a political CBC panel where we found out that the Conservatives have not been allowing a full expenditure by the RCMP to deal with cyberexploitation as there was \$2 million that had not been spent.

The member himself has indicated that we need to do more. Yet, because the directive has gone out that the Conservatives need to save money wherever they can because of this \$2 billion income splitting plan that they need to finance somehow, they are talking about \$2 million annually coming out of fighting cyberbullying.

I wonder if the member could provide some comment on the importance of the RCMP using that budget in order to fight these important issues on which Canadians are demanding more action.

• (1730)

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, to the best of my knowledge the Canadian Centre for Child Protection is located in Winnipeg. It is one of the strongest supporters of this government's allocation of resources and initiatives to fight child pornography, child exploitation, and ensure that we are standing up for victims of crime. I do not believe it is suggesting that this government has short-changed organizations with respect to resources to do this important work in any way.

What is important today is that we are debating a piece of legislation that will amend the Criminal Code of Canada. It is our job as parliamentarians to pass laws that protect Canadians. That is the focus tonight and that is what we should continue to do, do our job and pass legislation that protects children.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time.

This is an issue that affects all of us. I do not know that anybody in society, as I mentioned before, supports having offenders out there who prey on young people, but sexual offenders actually do not just prey on young people; they prey on all people.

We will support this particular bill at third reading. However, we remain concerned with the type of legislation that the government keeps putting forward without providing proper resources.

As I mentioned before, I worked at Probation and Parole Services in Ontario for 13 years. I must correct the record as well. I mentioned my daughter working at the Brampton youth correctional centre, but she is actually a correctional officer at the Roy McMurtry Youth Centre. I just clarify that for the record. She has been working there for quite some time. She works mostly with level 1 offenders.

People may wonder what a level 1 or a level 2 offender is. I think we have to look at whether or not an offender is high risk when we look at the prevention and rehabilitation aspect, but it is important that we actually do look at rehabilitation and prevention. Reintegration into society is also important, because at some point in time people do get released.

Our perspective is that we are not opposed to the legislation, but when we put legislation in place, we need to make sure that it is the right legislation and that we provide the tools required to make sure it will actually be effective. We need to make sure that the statistics at the end of the day will show that it was the right thing to do.

Private Members' Business

When we look at the crime bills that the government has been putting forward, over and over again we see that the resources are just not there. On this particular bill, it is ironic that the government has tabled legislation dealing with an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Sex Offender Information Registration Act, to enact the high risk child sex offender database act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts when we have just been advised that over \$10 million in funding that was allocated to the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre went unused. The parliamentary secretary basically said that they did not spend all that money because there were human resource challenges stemming from the nature of the work.

If there were these types of challenges, should the government not have acted? Should it not have said, "Let us make sure we have proper staffing."? It is telling us there is a big demand and that a lot of casework needs to be dealt with on this issue; it is true that we have seen an increase in people being charged, but imagine all the other people out there who are not being charged because the RCMP does not have the proper resources. The government decided to pay down the deficit instead of investing in the protection of Canadians, of our young people, of our children. That is the big problem we see with the government.

• (1735)

Earlier in the debate, Conservatives raised questions with respect to whether sentences should be consecutive and concurrent. As I indicated, the Conservatives can put all they want into the legislation, and I think that is what we need to do as legislators, but we also have to listen to what the judges have to say. We have to make sure that the people hearing the cases have legislation that actually works, but at the end of the day we have to allow them to do what they need to do in the judicial process.

Having worked in the field for quite some time, I know that when a serious crime has been committed, especially when it involves a sex offender, the judge will order a pre-sentence or pre-disposition report that will give the whole story of what actually happened, along with the person's history. Judges make their decisions on sentencing based on that report.

I want to go back to what was said in the House. One of the Conservative members tried to say that there was no rehabilitation for sex offenders, yet the ministry's website talks about rehabilitation for sex offenders. It states:

More than most crimes, sex crimes instill feelings of fear and anger in citizens. When a past sex offender is released from custody, fear and anger can consume a community.

It goes on to say:

Media stories about sex crimes often serve to inflame emotions and rarely tell the whole story about the treatment and rehabilitation of sex offenders.

It further states:

Research shows that treatment of sex offenders does make a difference. Sex offenders who receive treatment are less likely to re-offend. Offenders who don't receive treatment are likely to re-offend at a rate of 17% compared to 10% for offenders who have received treatment. Indeed, most sexual offenders do not re-offend after a certain age.

It is important that the conversation we are having is about the need to ensure that the proper resources are in place when we put this type of legislation in place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking will have three minutes remaining when this matter returns before the House.

It being 5:39 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL SPINAL CORD INJURY AWARENESS DAY ACT

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, Ind.) moved that Bill C-643, An Act to establish National Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank all the members of the House who have helped get this bill to this stage in the process. It is the product of our collective efforts and co-operation over the long haul. My esteemed colleagues are doing their part admirably.

I would also like to thank our partners who have supported us during this process and have assisted us in developing this bill, which aims to designate the third Friday of September as National Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Day. I would also like to point out that my bill is seconded by the member for Victoria.

With the co-operation of MEMO-Quebec, we concluded that this bill could be very useful, and that raising people's awareness would have a very positive impact for people living with spinal cord injuries. Many people with disabilities in my riding of Montcalm, across Quebec and indeed throughout Canada are listening to us today. They are following the progress of our debates very closely and now want to see this bill move forward. I hope we do not let them down.

This bill would make the third Friday of September National Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Day. Why the third Friday in September? Simply for two key reasons. The first is that accidents frequently occur during the summer. The third Friday of September is a time of year when rehabilitation centres in particular are flooded with spinal cord injuries.

The second reason is that the third Friday of September also has a symbolic meaning. It is the time of year when the days start getting darker. In the months following a spinal cord injury, the injured person will endure dark days that are akin to a difficult fall and a painful winter.

Private Members' Business

This is a simple and effective bill that will cost nothing and provides one more tool to those involved in helping people with spinal cord injuries and to agencies that work on prevention and raising public awareness. We do not want to ignore the many difficulties people with spinal cord injuries face, far from it. Nonetheless, we wanted to create this awareness day to get across to Canadians the terrible, irreversible consequences of certain accidents. I was never one to tempt fate and so I could not have anticipated that life would test me so harshly. Often, people with spinal cord injuries joke that we are like cats who land on their feet, that after our accidents we set the clock back to zero and started a new life with new obstacles, but also with new and very interesting challenges.

That said, I will respectfully present our bill, which we have put a lot of thought into. This bill has three components. The first objective is to raise public awareness. Spinal cord injury victims must have more encouragement to actively participate, without prejudice, in our society. The bill would also recognize the determination of those with spinal cord injuries to build a new life for themselves, as well as the dedication of the people who help them and the perseverance of the scientists whose research has improved the lives of thousands of people with spinal cord injuries. This day would also serve as a tool to help prevent such injuries, as I mentioned earlier. I will come back to this a little later.

It would be useful to look at the actual statistics. In Canada, there were approximately 86,000 people living with spinal cord injuries in 2013. There are the victims themselves but also their families and friends, who live with the disability affecting the person they love. I would like to take this opportunity to salute all caregivers who look after a person with a disability, and who live and work close to them. I recognize that the situation is often stressful or harrowing for those close to people with spinal cord injuries because they are not the ones living with this disability and do not really understand it. It is up to us, as the people with the injury, to reassure them and to shed a different light on the situation. I am not saying that this is simple and easy to do, but I believe that, in the end, we will find a certain serenity and, above all, a zest for life that is great to share. We must admit that they will perhaps provide invaluable assistance.

We now know that there are 86,000 people affected in Canada, but to that total we have to add the 4,300 people who are injured every year. We must remember that prevention really does work, and that every policy that can promote the production and dissemination of new awareness and prevention campaigns has a positive impact on the work of the people on the ground.

•(1745)

This bill is a step in that direction, and I sincerely hope that it will be passed.

In Quebec and in Canada, falls are the leading cause of spinal cord injuries, followed by motor vehicle accidents. That includes all-terrain vehicles. In the United States, many spinal cord injuries result from acts of violence, a cause that is almost non-existent in Quebec and Canada.

Let us look at the number of casualties based on the etiology of the trauma: 31% of injuries result from motor vehicle accidents, including all-terrain vehicles; 46% result from falls; 5% result from

acts of violence; and 18% result from sports, recreational activities and other unknown causes.

In Quebec, people with spinal cord injuries are hospitalized for an average of 14 to 57 days, depending on the nature of the injury, namely whether the patient has complete or incomplete quadriplegia, or complete or incomplete paraplegia. The average hospital stay of these patients in Quebec is shorter than the national average, which is between 24 and 63 days, but longer than the American average, which is between 9 and 18 days.

Most people with spinal cord injuries are transferred to an in-patient rehabilitation centre once their condition has stabilized. In Quebec, they remain in that centre for an average of 58 to 202 days, depending on the nature of the injury. The length of stay in these centres in Quebec is comparable to or slightly lower than the national average, which is about 173 days, but much higher than in American centres, which are between 30 and 56 days.

Beyond the physical injury, people with spinal cord injuries often suffer from emotional distress. It is very common for these patients to feel hopeless at the thought of never being able to go back to the life they knew before and also feel discouraged by the many rehabilitation challenges they must face.

People with spinal cord injuries will often remember their stay in the rehabilitation centre. I thought that some of the people who worked in the centre took some kind of sick pleasure in forcing me to hear about their reality, which was not one I was ready to accept. What is more, I did not like the ironic demeanor that some of them had. Today, I understand that they were probably just trying to lighten the mood, but at the time, I found it rather unusual. After many years, I think I have heard all of the wheelchair jokes hundreds of times. I have not heard a new joke for at least the past 10 years.

Public awareness has a profound impact on how easily people with disabilities can return to the workforce. Indeed, how other people look at you is often the first change that people with spinal cord injuries have to get used to. When our neighbours, colleagues and community are ready to make a small effort to make our day-to-day lives a little easier, and when society is willing to accommodate its services to our specific needs, as modest as they may be, we will always want to return the favour. Usually everyone wins. I am not talking about charity here, although the economic factor definitely does enter the equation.

However, when an employer gives someone with a spinal cord injury a chance and agrees to a few small changes in their usual methods to accommodate a worker, that employer will have a motivated and productive worker who really wants to contribute to the success of the business that hired them and is providing support. Through such actions, people with spinal cord injuries gain the same dignity that is essential to everyone, and participate just as actively in creating our collective wealth.

Truth be told, the return to the workforce for people with disabilities can be challenging, and greater public awareness would make this process a little easier. We can improve the lives of thousands of people while also enhancing our social cohesion. That is what I call a win-win.

Private Members' Business

Coming back after a prolonged work stoppage is a huge step, and for someone with a spinal cord injury, it is an even bigger one. Someone who deliberately chooses to leave his or her job for a certain period probably has a stronger feeling of control over the situation than someone who is forced to quit because of an illness or accident. I think the reason for the work stoppage definitely has an impact on the return.

• (1750)

When people are away from work following a spinal cord injury, it is not true that they return to work as though they left the night before. It is easy to understand since their colleagues will continue to carry out their professional activities, look for opportunities and manage workplace challenges. People with a spinal cord injury who were gone from work for a long time often doubt themselves and do not have the same priorities as their colleagues.

We become more aware of certain aspects of our personal life and also our professional life. We have time to figure out what we really want to improve and what we want to pursue and, conversely, what we want to distance ourselves from and what we no longer want to put up with, such as a heavy workload because we know our physical condition requires extra effort and we might tire more easily.

Nonetheless, there is also a sense of personal accomplishment and self-esteem, which help a person recognize what they are good at and feel like their knowledge is still in demand. I believe that developing a talent and using it to help others is a fundamental part of human endeavour and it is really quite nice.

By creating a national spinal cord injury awareness day, we can officially recognize the courage and determination of people with spinal cord injuries. These Canadians make gargantuan efforts to be independent and regain their quality of life, and the rehabilitation of newly injured people is a remarkable feat in itself.

Each of these individuals has invaluable potential and a lot to offer, and the rehabilitation of people with spinal cord injuries is undeniable proof of strength and determination.

Dear colleagues, that is a fundamental part of our bill, which I think will help improve our society as well as do a great service to our friends, family members, neighbours, colleagues, or anyone who suffered a serious traumatic injury and is working very hard to regain their dignity and quality of life.

Furthermore, we must use this day to highlight not only the dedication of caregivers, of course, but also the dedication and perseverance of the scientists and researchers who are focused on the cause and sacrifice a part of their life and energy to find medical breakthroughs and give hope to those with spinal cord injuries.

As we know, modern science is evolving very quickly and advances in medical research provide hope for new treatments and technologies in the near future that could affect the quality of life of people living with spinal cord injuries and even provide hope for recovery in some cases. In fact, 20 years ago, who could have imagined today's medical advances?

Whether in terms of treatments, technological innovations or therapeutic solutions, there are many fields of research. Advances

are being made in tandem on many levels. The wonderful techniques of the present foreshadow those of the future and open the door to legitimate hope for many.

Before talking more about the current state of research in Quebec, I have to first acknowledge the progress and achievements that have been made. I must also acknowledge the work of the people who are invested in improving the quality of life of people with spinal cord injuries on a daily basis. We have to promote research and we have to promote hope.

When I hear that advances are being made in biomedical science, I know that the quality of life of many people has been improved. The assessment of injuries is more precise, the development of tools is increasingly effective and preventive measures, procedures and treatments are continually improving.

We must promote this field of research and stimulate investment in this area. A number of foundations across the country are constantly working on finding money for research and new sources of funding.

The national spinal cord injury awareness day can help in that regard by symbolically bringing together the different organizations and increasing the visibility of their various campaigns.

This is just one of many suggestions, and I am confident that the organizations concerned will be able to make good use of this day to maximize their efforts.

This bill and the establishment of a national spinal cord injury awareness day are far from being just symbolic. This has the potential to help save lives and to reduce the number of new spinal cord injuries in Canada.

Every year, let us not waste this opportunity, which benefits everyone, as I said. This issue should never be highly partisan. We should remember that anyone can sustain a spinal cord injury.

• (1755)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know we look at having many national days in our country and certainly the member has brought up a very important point. She has articulated very well some of the challenges and why she believes it is important.

Could she talk more about what she believes the day would actually accomplish and what this day, if it is proclaimed, would mean to the victims with spinal cord injuries?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Manon Perreault: Mr. Speaker, we want to establish this day in order to recognize these people's efforts. We also want to promote prevention since people often behave recklessly and some accidents can be avoided. People are often not aware of how their actions—whether it is playing sports, driving, horseback riding or diving—can affect their lives.

Private Members' Business

People need to know more about this and we need to recognize the importance of a day of awareness in this regard. Many organizations are doing good work in this area, but there is no day dedicated to this cause. They would appreciate a national day of awareness.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the introduction of the bill. When we look at these special designated days, it can have an impact. The member makes reference to education.

By designating days, members of all political stripes are afforded an opportunity to talk about that day, whether in householders, or different promotions, or bringing it to the attention of local schools or asking for special attention given to it. By educating, we can have an impact on the whole issue of spinal cord injuries, hopefully leading to prevention of this type of injury from occurring.

Would the member, from personal experience, share some of her thoughts on the types of special events she would encourage in her constituency, or what other members might want to consider in promoting the day at the local level?

[Translation]

Ms. Manon Perreault: Mr. Speaker, the organizations I contacted needed three days to provide workshops to people. I am asking for just one national day.

It is important to understand that spinal cord injuries are also associated with head and chest injuries. It is rare for someone to come into a hospital with just one spinal cord injury. I think that people realize that. They know that a national day would help raise awareness about the consequences of these injuries. They are with us every day, every time we wake up.

• (1800)

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Montcalm for her very sensitive speech. She commented on the importance of this awareness day, to ensure that people understand what it means to have your life turned completely upside down after sustaining a spinal cord injury in an accident.

My colleague spoke about how there are consequences other than those directly associated with the spinal cord injury. What other physical or psychological effects could be caused by a spinal cord injury or that type of accident?

Ms. Manon Perreault: Mr. Speaker, a number of people who are in rehabilitation often end up having to return to the hospital with lung problems. That is one of the more serious problems. They also end up back in hospital because of problems associated with extreme fatigue or depression, naturally.

This really goes beyond the spinal cord injury, since the physical injury makes the individual vulnerable to other issues.

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real honour to stand in the House today to speak about spinal cord injuries. This important issue deserves a discussion not only in Parliament but at the national level. I would like to take a

moment to thank the hon. member for Montcalm for introducing this bill.

Bill C-643, an act to establish national spinal cord injury awareness day, proposes the designation of the third Friday of September each year as national spinal cord injury awareness day. At a fundamental level, this bill is about raising awareness of spinal cord injuries across Canada. It acknowledges the many challenges faced by Canadians living with spinal cord injuries as well as the critical role played by those who provide support and care for people with spinal cord injuries. It recognizes the important and significant contribution of the scientific community in improving the lives of thousands of people living with spinal cord injuries through research.

According to the final report of the national population health study of neurological conditions, entitled "Mapping Connections: An understanding of neurological conditions in Canada", there are approximately 120,000 Canadians living with neurological conditions caused by spinal cord injuries. From this report, we also know that the incidence of spinal cord injuries is likely to be anywhere in the range of 1,400 to 1,700 a year over the next 20 years. These are alarming statistics. However, for Canadians living with spinal cord injuries, they are not just numbers.

Our Conservative government recognizes the significant impact spinal cord injuries have on the individuals affected, their families and friends, their community, and society at large. Spinal cord injuries entail enormous human, social, and economic burdens. There are staggering personal costs, including the cost of care and support over a lifetime. That is why raising awareness of injury prevention initiatives is critical. This includes the important initiatives our government has undertaken as well as those undertaken by national and regional non-governmental organizations. Reducing injuries among all Canadians, including spinal cord injuries, is important and achievable by increasing awareness of spinal cord injuries and by reducing the risks.

Who of us, in our younger days, did not dive into a body of water not knowing what the depth was? There are many risks we take, and awareness is certainly important.

Through the Public Health Agency of Canada, our government is involved in enhancing efforts to increase awareness of sports-related injuries among children and youth, which in turn will help to reduce many different preventable injuries, including spinal cord injuries.

I will give the House some examples over the next few minutes of some of the interventions that are happening.

In 2011, our government provided \$5 million over two years to support injury prevention initiatives that reached Canadian children and youth in the communities where they live and play. The overall goal of the active and safe initiative was to reduce sports and recreation-related injuries sustained by children and youth, up to the age of 19, who participate in hockey, snow sports, cycling, and swimming. Through community-based activities, this investment increases injury awareness in sports and recreational activities by empowering Canadians to make safe choices for their children to reduce the risk of serious injuries, such as brain and spinal injuries.

Private Members' Business

We have recently gained a better understanding of the impact of falls on older Canadians with the release of the Public Health Agency of Canada's "Seniors' Falls in Canada: Second Report", which was released in May, 2014. This report confirms that falls are the leading cause of injury among Canadians over the age of 65, with approximately 20% to 30% of seniors experiencing one or more falls per year. Of those seniors who experienced injuries due to falls, 8% involved injuries to the back or spine. That is a statistic I was completely unaware of.

In addition to supporting injury prevention initiatives, our government continues to support spinal cord injury research through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The work of its top researchers contributes to understanding the changes in neurons and support cells that could prevent and alleviate chronic neuropathic pain syndrome and could improve the recovery of limb function following spinal cord trauma or neurotrauma.

• (1805)

There are number other world-renowned organizations that work tirelessly toward reducing spinal cord injuries and disabilities. They advocate for improved quality of life for Canadians with spinal cord injury and continue to raise awareness of this issue. One of these organizations, which is a name familiar to many of us in this chamber and to Canadians across the country, is the Rick Hansen Foundation.

Before I speak specifically about the foundation, I would like to take a few moments to acknowledge the truly inspirational Canadian that Rick Hansen is. Although Rick suffered a life-changing spinal cord injury as a teenager, losing the use of his legs due to an automobile accident, he maintained a positive outlook. Through rehabilitation and steadfast determination, he continued to keep moving forward. Rick was involved in sports and eventually became a highly respected advocate for people living with a disability. At the 1982 Pan Am Games, held in Halifax, Rick took home nine gold medals. He was also hugely successful at both the 1980 and 1984 Paralympic Summer Games, winning gold, silver and bronze medals.

In 1985, Rick set out on a two-year journey known as the "Man in Motion World Tour". This was a visionary quest to demonstrate to the world that people living with a disability had huge potential and could contribute to society if communities were more accessible and inclusive. This was the *raison d'être* for raising awareness of spinal cord injuries and disabilities in Canada and around the world.

Shortly after completing this tour, the Rick Hansen Foundation was established in 1988. In addition to finding a cure, the foundation endeavours to accelerate the progress in prevention and care of spinal cord injury as well as raising both awareness and funds to support people with disabilities.

On the 20th anniversary of the Man in Motion World Tour in 2007, our government announced funding for the foundation in support of its search for a cure for spinal cord injuries.

From 2007 to 2013, we have provided \$30 million to the foundation to implement a spinal cord injury data system across the country and to support spinal cord injury research and the promotion

of best practices in spinal cord injury care so Canadians affected by spinal cord injury can benefit from an improved quality of life.

The spinal cord injury registry started in Vancouver in 2003 and has since expanded across Canada. As of 2013, the registry was operational in 31 facilities in 15 cities. It is a huge accomplishment for the foundation, and our government is proud that we have played a role in its success.

Some of this funding also supported the creation of the Rick Hansen Institute in 2007, which is focused on research and care management. This institute is an independent not-for-profit organization committed to accelerating the translation of discoveries and best practices into improved treatments for people with spinal cord injury. This means that the institute leads a network of people with spinal cord injuries, researchers, service providers and other stakeholders that facilitate greater collaboration within the care and cure communities nationally and around the world. It is truly commendable work and it showcases the steadfast pursuit to achieve a world without paralysis after a spinal cord injury.

To keep the momentum going, the government announced \$35 million to support some additional work of the Rick Hansen Foundation in spinal cord research.

Many other activities are currently happening, but certainly the designation of the third Friday in September as a national spinal cord awareness day would highlight these and other related commemorative events throughout the year.

Raising awareness about an issue such as spinal cord injury is a positive action. It is a simple action that can have profound effects on those living with a spinal cord injury. Most important, if we can prevent future injuries so we can turn the tide on the troubling statistics, it will be time and effort well spent.

• (1810)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to speak on this important initiative introduced by my colleague, the member for Montcalm. I am grateful to her for raising the awareness of the House and grateful that I could second the bill.

I am also grateful to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for her remarks just now. I am very hopeful that the bill will pass the House for the very reasons she suggested so persuasively a moment ago.

The bill would designate the third Friday in September as a day to remember those who have been struggling with spinal cord injuries. What it would not do is create a legal holiday, but rather, just a day for awareness, as the title of the bill suggests. That is a very simple and important thing to do without the economic consequences of another day off. Therefore, it need not be of any concern to employers or others who might be worried about that.

My colleague, the member for Montcalm, suggested very persuasively that this is not just important for the victims of spinal cord injuries, which I certainly understand, but also for the caregivers and their families. She saluted the critical role of caregivers in her remarks, which is something that ought to be remembered by all members as we debate the bill.

Private Members' Business

People ask what this would be for. It would be a tool for awareness, and also for fundraising. It could be a focal point for those who are trying to raise awareness of spinal cord injuries. That in and of itself would be a good enough reason for us to support the initiative.

I want to give a shout out to Spinal Cord Injury Canada. I did a little research. The organization, which used to be called the Canadian Paraplegic Association, has been around for 70 years. It has been making an enormous contribution, not just to victims but also to their families in so many ways. I am hoping that it will support this initiative.

One of the things that Spinal Cord Injury Canada does is to sponsor an event on the Hill every year. Mr. Speaker, you will be aware that on May of last year, six members of Parliament and one senator got into wheelchairs, even though they were not disabled, to gain a better understanding of what the reality is for people suffering from this disability. My colleague, the member for York South—Weston, and my colleague, the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, spearheaded that and participated in it.

I want to acknowledge that the government has pledged over \$30 million in funding over five years for spinal cord injury research, which I think has been very well received by stakeholders and the medical community. That needs to be acknowledged as an important contribution.

The cause of spinal cord injury, as my colleague from Montcalm noted, is most frequently injury or trauma of some sort, but it also has to be remembered that sometimes these injuries result from acquired diseases that cause, for example, tumours on the spine or viral, and bacterial infections like polio. It is not just those caused by trauma, although I am sure those are majority of situations the bill would address.

My colleague, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, made reference to one of my heroes, and I am sure a hero for many Canadians, Rick Hansen. How many of us would ever forget his Man in Motion Tour? I can still hear the Bryan Adams song in my head as I mention it. I remember driving into Vancouver one day when he was coming in after his national tour across the country in his wheelchair. I will never forget the emotion of people listening to the CBC that day and phoning in to try to make a pledge. No one could get through because the lines were absolutely jammed. In my part of the world, he is one of our true heroes.

I am sure I speak for all Canadians when I acknowledge that he has given back in so many important ways since then. Not only has he raised awareness, as my colleague pointed out, but has also, through his Rick Hansen Institute, done a number of important things, like coordinating a national strategy called the access to care and timing project, which involved multiple research centres across Canada, with the goal of scaling up effective clinical practices and providing more timely access to care for patients in this area.

●(1815)

I thought it was important that my colleague from Montcalm noted the reason for the proposed day being the third Friday in September. She said that it was because it was after the summer when so many people are affected by this terrible trauma due to

injuries occurring during the summer. It occurs more frequently, it must be said, in the demographic of risky behaviour primarily by younger men.

However, the point of getting this initiative out at that time would serve as a message during the summer for people to remember to take greater care: do not speed while driving, be careful when playing sports, do not dive into shallow water, and these sorts of things.

The number of people afflicted with spinal cord injury is quite staggering and the costs, both human and economic, are immeasurable. There are 86,000 people in Canada living with spinal cord injuries and that is expected to grow to 121,000 by 2030. There are 4,300 new cases a year in this country and the majority are as a result of injuries to young males between 20 and 29 years of age. However, as we have an aging population, as others have acknowledged, there will be more affected because of falls among the elderly population.

The economic cost is \$2.7 billion every year. Of course, the use of the medical system by those with spinal cord injuries is obviously enormous as well. In comparison, they are re-hospitalized 2.6 times more often than the general population. They require contact with a physician 2.7 times more often. They require home care services 30 times more than others.

These are important statistics, but they do not tell the whole story. They do not tell the story about the tragic changes in people's lives who are affected by spinal cord injury. The bill before us would bring awareness to that.

My colleague spoke eloquently about the importance of prevention, but also about the impact on families, caregivers and individuals who are affected by spinal cord injuries.

I pay tribute to the government for its funding efforts in this regard, but many people continue to live in real poverty as a consequence of these spinal cord injuries and we need to address that. We must do more with workplace accommodation for those people with disabilities trying to find work and keep work with mobility, access and accommodation issues.

We must do better with the caregiver tax credit, which is a non-refundable tax credit. It does not cover many disabled people who are affected or the spouses who take care of disabled partners and the like. These issues, among others, must be addressed.

Nevertheless, this is not the time, as colleagues have pointed out, for partisan commentary. It is to work together across the aisle to see if we can agree on this. It sounds like we will be able to achieve a bill in this regard. I am so grateful to my colleague from Montcalm for bringing forward what appears to be an initiative that will be successful in this House.

●(1820)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to support Bill C-643, an act respecting a national spinal cord injury awareness day.

I would like to congratulate my colleague, the member for Montcalm, for bringing the bill forward and for being an advocate for those living with disabilities.

Private Members' Business

Establishing a day to recognize the impact spinal cord injuries have on Canadians, the health care system, and the economy would bring awareness to this debilitating and serious condition.

Up until 2010, health officials, shockingly, had no idea how many Canadians were living with a spinal cord injury or the economic cost of the condition.

However, there was a report commissioned by the Rick Hansen Institute that revealed some startling data. I know this House will all want to, and we have heard it already tonight, recognize Rick Hansen, who became a world-class wheelchair athlete before undertaking the Man in Motion World Tour in 1985, during which he rolled more than 40,000 kilometres in 34 countries in two years raising \$26 million for spinal cord research.

The report indicated that there were over 86,000 people living with a spinal cord injury in Canada, or about the same number as the population of Red Deer, Alberta. About 4,300 new cases are identified in our country each year. After speaking with Spinal Cord Injury Canada yesterday, I am informed that the number is now 96,000 Canadians. Approximately 51% of spinal cord injury cases are the result of traumatic injury and 49% are the result of non-traumatic injury or, rather, diseases such as ALS and cancer.

The report laid out, for the first time, the scale, magnitude, and cost of a spinal cord injury in human and economic terms. This was an important milestone because measuring the extent of the problem is the first step in developing strategies for preventing, mitigating, treating and, hopefully one day, curing spinal cord injuries.

Spinal cord injuries require substantial medical care. Canadians with a spinal cord injury who are admitted to intensive care units have reduced mortality and morbidity, as well as improved neurologic recovery. The average length of a hospital stay after the initial injury is 140 days, or almost five months, including critical care, acute care, and in-patient rehabilitation.

New methods for treating spinal cord injury are being studied, including surgical decompression, therapeutic hypothermia, and neuroprotective agents.

The economic cost of traumatic spinal cord injury is \$3.6 billion a year, including \$1.8 billion in direct medical costs. The lifetime medical costs, in the words of a recent study, for a quadriplegic exceed \$3 million and for a paraplegic, \$1.6 million. For Canadian families, the average cost of a manual wheelchair is \$4,000 to \$5,000 and the average cost of a power wheelchair is \$10,000 to \$15,000.

The long-term health care costs are not due to paralysis but, rather, to medical complications. Severe depression is also common among people with a spinal cord injury. Treatment for depression accounts for almost half of physician visits.

These are just numbers and do not speak to the impacts on the person affected and on the families. I cannot begin to imagine how frightening and overwhelming are the days, weeks, and months following a spinal cord injury. Everything changes in an instant and people will have many questions.

Canadians with a spinal cord injury need to know that they are not alone and that there are people and organizations that will help them through acute care, rehabilitation, and a return to the community.

Canadians with a spinal cord injury need to know there are resources available to help them find the latest information on research, clinical trials, and rehabilitation techniques that may have an impact upon improved function and recovery. They need to know that there are financial resources, peer support, and organizations that can help renovate their home to make it accessible, get assistive devices to help with everyday tasks, and help them return to the community.

● (1825)

As a country, we can and must do more to support Canadians living with spinal cord injury and their families. All levels of government must work together to put in place essential measures to secure the right to education and economic participation. We need policies and programs that promote physically accessible homes, hospitals, schools, transportation and workplaces, inclusive education, elimination of discrimination in educational and employment settings, vocational rehabilitation to optimize the chance of employment, micro finance and other forms of self-employment, benefits to support alternative forms of economic self-sufficiency, access to social support payments that do not act as a disincentive to return to work, and correct understanding of spinal cord injury and positive attitudes toward people living with it. The member for Montcalm's bill would help to raise awareness, and this is positive.

The Urban Futures institute predicts that the number of people living with spinal cord injury will increase sharply in the coming years, reaching 121,000 in 2030. The expected increase is largely due to the aging population. Older people have more falls and suffer disproportionately from illnesses such as cancer.

I have had the honour and privilege of working with Canadians with physical and mental health challenges my whole life, and everyday I learn from them and am inspired by them. I also want to recognize the work of all health practitioners and organizations which work hard to improve the quality of life of Canadians living with a spinal cord injury and their families.

I know many of us have taken part in Spinal Cord Injury Canada's chair-leader event, during which we spend the day in a wheelchair and live first hand what accessibility really means. We learn very quickly the obstacles Canadians in chairs face. Everything is harder. It is hard to manage the chair. It does not always turn well. Getting into an elevator is hard, managing in the washroom is hard, reaching counters is hard, getting up and down Parliament Hill is really hard, and cars do not always see the chair.

The chair-leaders event is extremely important to get exposure for people in chairs, to raise awareness, to see the obstacles people face, to understand that there are financial hurdles and that we as a society must do more to help. The member for Montcalm's bill would ensure that, annually, there would be a day devoted to raising awareness about spinal cord injury.

In closing, spinal cord injuries have severe, long-term impacts. They affect almost 100,000 Canadians and their families, have far-reaching consequences, including financial hardship and caregiving needs, and the number of Canadians suffering is increasing as the population ages. The costs for people suffering from spinal cord injuries number in the billions. Spinal cord awareness would foster an environment for greater research into new treatment options. Awareness would help provide doctors with improved options for treatment.

Let me once again congratulate the member on her bill and let us all remember there is life after injury. Canadians with spinal cord injuries are active, social, and vibrant members of our communities. Let us all celebrate ability and fight for more help for Canadians with spinal cord injury and their families.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Montcalm for bringing forward this motion to declare a national day of recognition of spinal cord injuries. The member for Montcalm and I have become good friends, as far as we can become friends across the aisle, ever since we had that first race down Parliament Hill, which she won. Then, in my power wheelchair, I think I won the race going up Parliament Hill.

There are now two people in Parliament with spinal cord injuries. I think it is indicative of how Canada is progressing when it deals with persons with disabilities, but we have a long way to go. Disability crosses a large spectrum, and spinal cord injury is a sliver of that spectrum, but it has a lot of neat characteristics. I would like to share some of those with the House.

When it comes to acquired spinal cord injuries, the categories are generally quadriplegic and paraplegic, quadra meaning four limbs impaired, and para two limbs.

In my case, as many people may know, though I do not believe I have ever spoken about it in the House, I hit a moose in 1996 when I was 23. At the beginning of my life, I had a lot of things going for me at the time, and the moose went through the windshield and landed on the back seat. My car went into the ditch and the moose went over me again.

It was in a part of Manitoba that was remote. There were no cellphones in those olden days. Someone had to find me. Then they had to drive down to the nearest town. Then they had to drive up with the ambulance, then drive me back to Winnipeg. There were no helicopters or anything else to help. It was a tough rescue, and for whatever reason, somehow I survived.

The reason I raise that is that if my accident had happened 10 years earlier, I would not have survived. People are now surviving injuries that historically were not survivable. That is from the advancement of medicine, and Canada should be proud of that.

Private Members' Business

However, on the one hand, we often save people from catastrophes, then on the other hand, not provide the resources or the opportunities to allow those same people to live meaningful and dignified lives.

Let me explain. I will use my injury as an example, but whatever I am about to say could be transferred to anyone with a spinal cord injury. My injury is what they call a C4 cord injury. If those at home feel behind their necks and count four vertebrae down, that is where my neck is broken. That is a cervical spine, and it was a complete injury that has paralyzed me completely from the neck down, so I do not feel anything. It is just pins and needles.

● (1830)

One does not feel touch, heat, cold, pain, pleasure, hunger, or temperature. Body temperature regulation is messed up. Many people have problems with blood pressure, strange or unusual bone growth at joints, if they are not taken care of, and a whole host of other issues.

In my case, I need help with all the activities of daily living. I cannot move, so I have someone with me 24 hours a day. It is sad to say that not everyone is as fortunate as I have been in acquiring that level of care. In my case, I have had a lot of fights with insurance companies and other funding partners and over the years have been able to lay the foundation for a reasonable quality of life.

However, it was not always that way. After leaving the hospital, I refused to go into an institution, though that was what was offered. I ended up in a one-bedroom apartment with no wheelchair accessible washroom or shower or anything, so it was a tough time. Many people are still experiencing that tough time. In fact, I would say it is the vast majority.

With quadriplegia, there are some estimates of costs. A quadriplegic in his or her early twenties will cost society tens of millions of dollars if he or she lives a normal life expectancy. A paraplegic costs less than that, but it is still substantial.

The Government of Canada has provided monies for the Rick Hansen Institute and Brain Canada Foundation and has invested in stem cell research. These are all fantastic investments, and there is great promise in stem cell research. However, we have a lot to do to improve the day-to-day lives of people with spinal cord injuries. When we do that, we also improve the lives of everyone, everyone with an illness, and the elderly. We are creating an accessible society so that people, like the member for Montcalm, can be seen in Parliament, as CEOs of companies, on top of glaciers or mountains, scuba diving, and living life.

There is a difference between existing and living. As Canadians, if we are going to save people, we need to make sure that they have the option to live meaningful and dignified lives. We need to step up and make sure that the systemic barriers in society are removed. Spinal cord injury awareness day will help us in recognizing the necessity of making society inclusive for everyone, regardless of what type of disability one may have.

Adjournment Proceedings

●(1835)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

●(1840)

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, In 1973 an oil pricing crisis broke out. OPEC forced the price of oil to skyrocket. The price of oil quadrupled. That was over 40 years ago, yet we do not seem to learn here in Canada.

Eastern Canada imports 80% of its oil from the same countries that caused the 1973 oil crisis, places like Venezuela and Saudi Arabia, which are no more stable today than they were 40 years ago. While this week's oil prices are low, tomorrow a crisis in one of these states will raise the price.

The U.S.A. learned from the oil crisis of the 1970s. In 1975, the U.S. set up the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to prevent future disruptions in their supply of oil.

Every country in the G20 has created some kind of national strategy to deal with fluctuations in the supply and the pricing of oil, except for Canada. We also produce enough oil every year to fulfill all of our domestic needs first and then continue to be a major exporter. Instead, we are currently importing Brent crude oil to eastern Canada, which is a risk-prone process. That oil is also the most expensive oil in the world. Under the current government, we are selling off our oil as raw crude in the west at a 30% discount while paying much more for expensive imports in eastern Canada.

My father was an investment banker. He taught me from an early age that to buy high and sell low is an incredibly dumb economic strategy. It is costing the Canadian economy at least \$18 billion a year in foreign trade deficits.

The Minister of Natural Resources retorts that the solution will come in the form of pipelines. Therefore, let us talk about pipelines. Specifically, let us talk about the northern gateway and Keystone XL, which are being built to export even more low-value crude oil out of the country without any plan to relieve eastern Canada from our dependence on foreign oil.

The Conservatives seem quite focused on the short term. The northern gateway is expected to create perhaps a few hundred permanent jobs in Canada at best. The Conservative plan is to export Canadian crude and Canadian jobs to Communist China and the U.S. instead of using the resources we already have in abundance to create jobs here at home for Canadians.

Pipelines can have serious negative, social, and environmental effects. Not only do the pipelines bulldoze through the treaty rights

of many first nations, but the inevitable spills will represent serious environmental risks. For example, the northern gateway would go through the Great Bear Rainforest, where a spill would not only threaten a priceless ecosystem but also threaten and perhaps kill a large portion of the B.C. economy that depends on fishing and tourism. Then it will be ferried away through the dangerous waters of B.C.'s north coast, where repeated studies have shown a high risk of a supertanker spills. Diluted bitumen is heavier than water and virtually impossible to clean up.

The debate on oil sands shipments is polarized between those who say that all pipelines are bad and those who say that all pipelines are good. Canada needs a balanced approach to energy and the environment—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, Canada is focused on expanding our energy export markets so we can benefit from the world price of oil. Due to the difference between Canadian and world prices for oil, Canadian oil producers lost over \$13 billion in revenue in 2012. That differential also meant lower revenue for governments that could have gone into housing and hospitals, health care and other vital infrastructure.

The solution, of course, is to expand Canada's energy infrastructure, including through the construction of pipelines: pipelines to relieve the bottlenecks in the U.S. that cause those price differentials; pipelines to bring oil from western Canada to eastern Canada; and pipelines to deliver our energy to tidewater where it can reach new markets abroad.

Our government's responsible resource development plan is aimed squarely at addressing these issues, developing Canada's resources, creating jobs and growing our economy. Global energy demand is expected to increase by 37% from 2012 to 2040, and Canada is well positioned to support that demand. However, without the infrastructure to move the product to offshore markets, our oil will be stranded in North America.

Getting access to these markets means building new infrastructure. Through the plan for responsible resource development, the Government of Canada is taking key steps to diversify Canada's energy export markets east and west, while improving the efficiency of regulatory processes, strengthening environmental protection and aboriginal engagement and participation in resource development.

Every day, energy products travel safely through 72,000 kilometres of federally regulated pipelines. In fact, our world-class safety system boasts a safety record of 99.999%. However, we will not be satisfied until that number is 100%, which is why we have put forward new legislation to strengthen our safety system in areas of prevention, preparedness and response, and liability and compensation.

Adjournment Proceedings

This government understands the importance of developing our pipeline capacity in Canada for Canadians. We want to see our producers get a competitive price for their product and have a safe means of transporting it to markets, both here in North America and around the world.

While we continue to monitor closely the recent decline in oil prices, we are also keeping our eye on the bigger picture and the longer view. We have been clear that projects will only be approved if they are proven safe for Canadians and for the environment. I look forward to the member's support for our pipeline safety legislation.

• (1845)

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, the lack of a national energy strategy should be the top priority for Conservatives, who are now costing the Canadian economy billions every year, making us dependent on unstable and expensive foreign oil, as well as postponing and preventing the development of more sustainable resources.

The Conservative approach has totally failed. It is time to look at an alternative that will benefit all Canadians, not just Alberta.

The Conservatives like to claim they have a good economic track record, but their economic and energy policies simply make no sense at all. We must end Canada's dependence on foreign oil and create a national energy strategy for Canada ASAP. The real long-term solution is to reduce our dependency on foreign oil through the

Green Party's plan to implement a revenue neutral carbon dividend, which would reduce both poverty and CO₂, and create many jobs for Canadians.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on responsible resource development and finding new emerging markets for Canada's energy products. Our government is working closely with our provincial partners to take advantage of this important opportunity. This past year, at the Energy and Mines Ministers' Conference, ministers reinforced the need to diversify Canada's natural resources by ensuring their safe transport.

We have an opportunity to diversify our energy markets in Canada and displace the import of foreign crude. That is why we are focused on expanding our energy transportation infrastructure. We must develop Canada's natural resources in a manner that is safe for Canadians and safe for the environment. Projects will only be approved if they are proven to be safe.

I look forward to the member's support on our world-class safety legislation.

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

(The House adjourned at 6:49 p.m.)

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