



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, May 26, 2015**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 26, 2015

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*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 14 petitions.

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### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on International Trade, in relation to the main estimates 2015-16.

[*Translation*]

#### ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, entitled "The Growing Problem of Identity Theft and Its Economic and Social Impact".

[*English*]

I also present the eighth report of the the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, entitled "Main Estimates 2015-16: Vote 1 under Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying, Vote 1 under Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, Votes 1 and 5 under Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioners of Canada and Vote 1 under Senate Ethics Officer".

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present the NDP's supplementary report on the identity theft study. We agree that identity theft is a

very serious issue and that the protection of Canadians' personal information is a key component of a strong digital economy. In general we agree with the recommendations and the report.

However, we believe that the recommendations fail to cover some issues, including the following: requiring government and Internet service providers to produce transparency reports whenever personal information is voluntarily shared; a targeted strategy for first nations; updating the Privacy Act; ways to verify IDs; the requirement for credit freezes to be offered to consumers; guidelines surrounding the use of social insurance numbers by private organizations; and order-making power for the Privacy Commissioner.

The NDP's supplementary recommendations would put an end to the growing problem of identity theft and would provide better protection for Canadians' personal information in the digital era.

\* \* \*

### COMPETITION PROSECUTION SERVICE ACT

**Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-681, An Act to amend the Competition Act (Competition Prosecution Service).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce my new bill on creating a competition prosecution service, which will allow the Competition Bureau to act more quickly when an offence requires criminal prosecution.

The bill gives the new director the authority to initiate and conduct, on behalf of the Attorney General of Canada, prosecutions under any act for the enforcement of which the Commissioner of Competition is responsible. Former competition commissioner Melanie Aitken recommended implementing such a measure in order to expedite legal action against offenders.

Unfortunately, bid rigging and price fixing remain common crimes in Canada, and Canadians expect the offenders to be punished quickly. My bill will help accelerate the legal process, thereby increasing protection for consumers. I certainly hope to have the government's support on this matter.

*Routine Proceedings*

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

\* \* \*

●(1005)

[English]

**PETITIONS**

## TOBACCO PRODUCTS

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am particularly happy to present two petitions, as the petitioners are youth in my riding.

The first petition is for the removal of all flavours of all tobacco products.

## AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the other petition is to adopt international aid policies to support small family farms, especially women farmers, and recognize their vital role in the struggle against hunger and poverty, and to ensure that Canadian policies and programs are developed in consultation with small family farms to protect the right of small family farms in the global south to preserve and use friendly exchanged seeds.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition calling on the Government of Canada to adopt international aid policies that support small farmers, especially women, in order to recognize their vital role in the struggle against hunger and poverty. The petition also calls on the government to ensure that Canadian policies and programs are developed in consultation with small farmers.

[English]

## AIR TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the residents of the Toronto waterfront, who are asking the federal government not to reopen the tripartite agreement that governs the island airport, in large part because of a proposal for jets on the waterfront, which many Torontonians find objectionable and at odds with the billions of dollars of investment that the federal, provincial, and city governments have made to beautify the waterfront.

The petitioners ask that the federal government reject the request from Porter Airlines to reopen the tripartite agreement to allow for jets, and for all members of this House to respect the residents of the waterfront and whenever possible refrain from flying Porter Airlines and making a situation, which is bad, much worse in terms of air pollution.

## INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting petitions today from parents all across Ontario. The petitioners request that Parliament require Internet service providers to provide a mandatory opt-in Internet pornography filter as a tool parents can use to protect their children from Internet pornography.

As members know, there have been many human-trafficking cases around the Windsor area, and the majority of these petitions come from the Windsor area.

## HOUSING

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions.

The first two are petitions signed by the residents of the Post 83 Co-operative Housing Association and the 115 Place Co-op, both of which are located in my riding of Burnaby—Douglas. Over the past decade, housing prices in metro Vancouver have skyrocketed and too many families are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to immediately renew funding for long-term operating agreements with social housing providers, and I strongly urge the government to consider this petition.

## IMPAIRED DRIVING

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my third petition is presented on behalf of my constituent George Sojka. In 2005, George's sister, Helen Sonja Francis, was killed by an impaired driver. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the RCMP officers were unable to forward a warrant to the justice of the peace for approval within the four-hour time limit as legislated. As a result, the samples of the impaired driver's blood were ruled inadmissible.

The petitioner calls on this House to amend the Criminal Code of Canada to change the current four-hour time limit for warrant approval to a six-hour time limit.

[Translation]

## TAXATION

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present this morning.

The first is signed by hundreds of people across Canada who are calling on the government to eliminate the tax on feminine hygiene products. An opposition motion has already been supported by all of the parties, and the petitioners really want the government to implement the motion it supported. The NDP and the petitioners believe that this tax is sexist and that it should be eliminated.

●(1010)

## CANADA POST

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition signed by people in my riding who want the government to stop making cuts to postal services. The government is continuing to reduce our postal services and is cutting home delivery. Many seniors and single women are concerned about this. More and more cities are asking the government not to go forward with these cuts. All of these people would like the government to listen to them.

## TAXATION

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to present a petition to eliminate the GST on feminine hygiene products. As I already said, I have three daughters and they have seven daughters. Let us just say that that costs parents a lot of money. It is fair and reasonable to eliminate the tax on these products because women have no choice but to use them.

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to present a petition to eliminate the federal tax on feminine hygiene products. Back in the days when our grandmothers used rags, such products may have been considered a luxury, but they have been considered essential for women for quite some time now. That is why all parliamentarians supported the NDP's opposition motion to get rid of that tax. The petitioners want that tax to be eliminated because it is sexist and it does not reflect the reality in which we now live. It is high time that this tax was abolished.

## OPTIMIST MOVEMENT

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first is signed by hundreds of people in my riding and pertains to a Canadian optimist day, which would be on the first Thursday in February. This day would be used to help young Canadians reach their potential. There are already more than 16,000 members of Optimist clubs in Canada. We could help provide encouragement to even more young Canadians.

## INTERNET ACCESS

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition pertains to Internet access in rural areas and across Canada. The Internet is a fundamental tool for developing knowledge and attracting people to the regions. It helps keep public programs accessible, lets people stay in touch with their loved ones at a low cost, and helps entrepreneurs attract employees. The petitioners are calling for a regulatory framework for providing affordable high-speed Internet all across the country. This petition was signed by my constituents as well.

\* \* \*

[English]

## 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 Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## PRIVILEGE

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on May 11, 2015, by the member for Timmins—James Bay, related to the government's response to written question

*Speaker's Ruling*

Q-1129, which was tabled in the House on May 8, 2015. I would like to thank the hon. member for having raised this matter, as well as the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the House Leader of the Official Opposition for their comments.

[English]

In raising this matter, the member for Timmins—James Bay explained that the response he received to his written question, Question No. 1129, regarding the procedure used by the government to verify that Senate appointees meet their constitutional residency requirements was that, "...the government does not comment on matters before the court". He characterized this answer as both completely insufficient and completely incorrect since the matter does not fall within the purview of the courts at this time. Thus, he argued the misleading character of the answer provided constituted a prima facie breach of privilege.

In response, the government House leader claimed that the answer put forward was, in fact, a re-statement of the *sub judice* convention. He argued that this was entirely appropriate as the question pertained to a matter rightfully before the courts in criminal proceedings at the present time. In addition, he noted that it is not within the purview of the Speaker to review government responses to questions and that other avenues were available if the member was not satisfied with the response.

Members place great importance on obtaining full and accurate information through answers to their written questions, a procedure that exists in part to allow members to fulfill their obligations as parliamentarians. Thus, the frequency with which the Chair has been called upon to rule on questions of privilege of this kind is, in some respects, understandable.

Invariably, when members deem that the content or quality of responses to written questions falls short, the Chair is asked to adjudicate. In each instance, the Chair has sought to remind members of the clear and long-standing limitations of the role of the Speaker in this regard. *House of Common Procedure and Practice*, second edition, states at page 522, "There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions", nor does parliamentary convention allow for this.

[Translation]

On February 8, 2005, Speaker Milliken, at page 3234 of *Debates*, confirmed this, stating:

Any dispute regarding the accuracy or appropriateness of this response is a matter of debate. It is not something upon which the Speaker is permitted to pass judgment.

O'Brien and Bosc, at pages 522 to 523 states:

### *Business of Supply*

“...on several occasions, Members have raised questions of privilege in the House regarding the accuracy of information contained in responses to written questions; in none of these cases was the matter found to be a prima facie breach of privilege.

●(1015)

[English]

That the answer that the member received to his question invokes the *sub judice* convention in no way alters or bolsters the authority of the Chair to review and pronounce itself on the accuracy or validity of that answer, even when it is interpreted to be a refusal to answer.

[Translation]

*House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, states, at page 522:

There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions.

[English]

Based on these precedents and on the information presented, I cannot conclude that the member has been impeded in the performance of his parliamentary duties. Therefore, I cannot find that a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred.

I thank honourable Members for their attention.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House: (a) the government has constrained the ability of federal scientists to share their research and to collaborate with their peers; (b) federal scientists have been muzzled and prevented from speaking to the media about their work; (c) research is paid for by taxpayers and must be done in the public interest in order to protect the environment and the health and safety of Canadians; and, therefore, (d) the government should immediately rescind all rules and regulations that muzzle government scientists, consolidate government-funded or -created science so that it is easily available to the public at large through a central portal, create a Chief Science Officer whose mandate would include ensuring that government science is freely available to those who are paying for it, namely, the public, and allow scientists to be able to speak freely on their work with limited and publicly stated exceptions.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Etobicoke North.

Today the Liberal Party affirms its commitment to making policy that is based on evidence. The Liberal Party is using its opposition day to move a motion calling on the Prime Minister and the Conservative Party to end their muzzling of scientists.

We also pledge to create the position of chief science officer, whose responsibilities will include not only providing advice to the Prime Minister and cabinet, but also ensuring that government science is publicly available and that scientists may speak freely about their research.

We have heard from scientists and people across Canada who have experienced the Conservative government's suppression of science and muzzling of scientists. They are deeply troubled by it.

We heard just last week about Steven Campana, former DFO scientist, a researcher of the population dynamics of sharks and other fishes. He was disciplined for, amongst other things, giving an interview for a fluff piece about a great white shark that was sighted off the coast of New England. This was after previously receiving a media spokesperson of the year award.

In 2010, NRCan scientist Scott Dallimore was not allowed to talk about a large flood in northern Canada which occurred 13,000 years ago without getting pre-approval from political staff.

In 2011, DFO scientist Kristina Miller could not speak to journalists about her research on salmon genetics which had implications for viral infections and salmon mortality.

A journalist, Tom Spears, looking into joint research between our NRC and NASA in the United States on snowfall patterns, sparked 50 emails between 11 government employees. Meanwhile, a phone call to NASA got the information in 15 minutes.

Another journalist seeking an interview with DFO scientist Max Bothwell about didymo, an algae known as rock snot, generated 110 pages of internal emails between 16 government communications staff, and there was no interview in the end.

Environment Canada scientists were shadowed by communications staff at the 2012 polar conference, which we hosted in Montreal.

Environment Canada scientists were given a script by communications officials, instead of being trusted to comment on a study led by Erin Kelly and David Schindler on contamination of water by oil sands operations, when they presented their results at a scientific conference in Boston.

Our federal scientists are experts in their fields. We should trust their ability to share valuable research findings in a professional and objective manner without commenting on government policy. We believe that they should share their research with the public and be free from political interference.

Conservative suppression of science goes beyond preventing government scientists from speaking freely about their research. It includes cuts to scientific research for the common good, cuts which jeopardize our safety, environment, competitiveness, and place on the world stage.

Government scientists want to do work that helps us govern ourselves wisely. It is no wonder that The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, PIPSC, is pushing for an unprecedented scientific integrity package in its collective bargaining agreement.

*Business of Supply*

What benefits do government scientists provide? Government scientists work in fields such as public health, environmental protection, resource stewardship, Canadian cultural and historical studies, or basic science which industry has little incentive to fund.

Government scientists can have the expertise to inform regulatory and legislative work in a more objective way than scientists employed by industry or interest groups. The perception of neutrality is also important when policy debates reach the public square. Scientists in government work closely with policy-makers, which helps to align their research priorities with public needs.

Why is freedom of speech important for government scientists? Restrictions on communication alter scientific work. Science relies on free and vigorous debate between scientists who have reached opposing conclusions. Scientists should not be pressured directly, or even indirectly, to self-censor or to weaken their conclusions so as to avoid upsetting the government of the day.

Mike Rennie described the work environment at the Experimental Lakes Area when it was under the control of the federal government as “toxic”, in part because of the communications policy.

The more controversial a public issue is, the more we need independent, objective, professional, well-reasoned facts to anchor government decision-making and the public's democratic participation in that decision-making.

When it comes to decisions that affect health and safety, fairness, the environment, or the economy, we need the best information when we decide on policy or how policy is to be implemented.

• (1020)

Restricting communication will make it hard to recruit good scientists. In an unprecedented move, PIPSC, The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, the union which represents government scientific staff, is asking for a scientific integrity package in its collective bargaining. They are not asking for salary increases, but in effect the freedom to do their work and allow it to contribute as much as possible to the public good, to make their work meaningful.

By contrast, Dr. Campana, the former DFO scientist, said last week: “the vast majority of our senior scientists are in the process of leaving now disgusted...”.

Finally, regarding communications, it is important for scientists to talk about their research, about nature, while following simple precautions. That is really free speech: something of value in and of itself in our society.

What are the precautions? What are the reasonable restrictions on what scientists can freely talk about? First of all, the public should never think that scientists are speaking for the government of the day, for the elected officials to whom the people have given the responsibility to make decisions. Scientists should talk about their research and not about government policy.

Government communications people can review a scientist's communications with the public in order to prepare a response because scientific findings do affect people's thinking. However, they should not restrict that communication.

Government scientists may collect personal data that should be kept confidential or proprietary information that is protected by an intellectual property agreement. That should be kept from the public.

Government scientists may have knowledge where public release would have negative consequences for public safety. That would be a limitation.

Government scientists will be known by their affiliation with federal institutions, whose reputations would be affected if there are significant errors in their research that is communicated publicly. Of course, there is a requirement for some sort of scientific peer review for quality control before public communication is permitted. That is appropriate. This is review by people whose expertise is science, not communications.

These are all examples of the limited restrictions that are mentioned in the motion, and these restrictions will be made public.

Making the changes that we are calling for will, of course, require monitoring, since different parts of government have different communications needs. That is why we call for the establishment of the position of chief science officer, to ensure that these changes are implemented and maintained for the benefit of Canada.

Canadians expect their government to embrace policy that is based on evidence. That process must be transparent. Government science which informs policy-making and is paid for by taxpayers must be open and accessible to the public. The public must be confident that information comes directly from scientists and is free from partisan political influence.

One of the things the Conservatives will say is that scientists can publish their results in journals. Even scientists do not just read journals to understand what another scientist has done. One can only do that if they work in the same specialized field as the other scientist. Scientists will sit down with another scientist, make a phone call, or sit in the hallway at a conference, and discuss the details of research in order to understand what the other scientists have done.

It is even more important for scientists to have two-way communication, usually through a science journalist, to communicate with the public, to make sure that the journalist understands what the scientist has done and to make sure that the communication is complete. It is not a rebuttal to say that scientists can publish in scientific journals.

*Business of Supply*

To summarize, a Liberal government will unmuzzle science for the public good and work to re-establish a respectful relationship with government scientists. We will create the position of chief science officer, whose responsibilities will include not only providing advice to the Prime Minister, but also ensuring that government science is publicly available and that scientists may speak freely about their research. The Liberal Party of Canada is committed to including these measures in its election platform.

● (1025)

[Translation]

A Liberal government will unmuzzle science for the public good and work to re-establish a respectful relationship with government scientists. The Liberal Party of Canada is committed to including these measures in its election platform.

[English]

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my friend's speech, and I first of all would like to congratulate him on a good motion. I will be supporting it in a vote here, as I think will the rest of us on this side of the House.

The first part of the member's speech is about the problems that the government has created for science and the second half of the speech is about solutions to the problems. I find them slightly mismatched. I find that the solutions that are proposed are good, but they do not go far enough.

I am wondering if he would perhaps have additional measures that he would like to add to protect science in Canada.

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Mr. Speaker, we would be creating a position of chief science officer. The chief science officer is related to the science advisor that the last Liberal government had, which was removed by the current Conservative government.

The position of chief science officer would not only have the responsibility of advising the government on science, but would also ensure that scientists are free to communicate so that government science is accessible to the public. The public has to have that information so that it can participate in democracy.

If we look at the economy and the innovative companies, leaders in social enterprise, leaders in doing government better, we can see in the last couple of decades the leaders who have been able to take knowledge and use it in a better way in terms of making government more efficient and effective.

The chief science officer would also have the responsibility of making sure that we use our knowledge to govern ourselves more wisely and efficiently so that Canada is a stronger country.

**Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I too listened to the comments of my colleague opposite.

It was not that long ago that this particular member came up to me and complimented our government in terms of our unprecedented funding for science and technology. In fact, we talked about the Thirty Meter Telescope. At the time, there had been considerable interest in supporting it. The member opposite said that he was not going to pursue it at the time because of the other strong support we

have given science in this country. It is interesting hearing his comments.

How does the member opposite square the unprecedented and tremendous financial support that this government announced in economic action plans 2014 and 2015 with his comments about somehow muzzling scientists? Frankly, why would we put that kind of money toward supporting scientists when he claims that we are muzzling them? That makes no sense.

● (1030)

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Mr. Speaker, I have a slightly different recollection of that conversation about the Thirty Meter Telescope, but I certainly did congratulate the government on funding it.

However, the current government has put more money into collaborations with industry. It is a fine thing to get industry to use science and technology to innovate, but it has cut its own science capacity, which is the capacity that is used for the public good, for public health and safety, for protecting the environment, and for studying Canada's cultural and historical heritage.

For example, Statistics Canada has a table entitled "Federal expenditures – On science and technology, research and development and related scientific activities in current dollars and in constant 2007 dollars". When we look at the constant 2007 dollars and where it was before the Conservatives took over in 2005-06, it is at \$10 billion. However, when we look at the last year that the numbers are available, it is about \$9.2 billion or \$9.3 billion. Therefore, if we correct for inflation, the spending on science inside the federal government has decreased.

It is fine that the government has helped industry, but if we look at the inflation correction and, by the way, add on the fact that the scientific research and experimental development credit has been cut by several hundred million dollars a year, we will see that is a total fabrication. The Conservative government has actually cut funding on science.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, science has always been and must remain a driving force for smart public policy, for example, by providing evidence how to best treat autism spectrum disorder and dementia, to ensure the safety and efficacy of our prescription drugs, to mitigate and adapt to climate change, to monitor our freshwater lakes and ozone, to protect species at risk, and the list goes on.

Scientific evidence helps us understand how a rapidly changing world affects our environment and health. Science should always be impartial in its application, and it is vitally important for administrators to affirm that they believe in the scientific process, transparency and accountability.

*Business of Supply*

Policies affect people. For example, when a family member has a prescription filled, he or she wants to be confident that if a federal scientist had any concern about the safety or efficacy of that drug, he or she was able to speak out, and that decisions were made based on the basis of research, not politics or profits. Only in such a policy-making environment can we feel that a drug is safe, that our air, food and water are safe. We need to know that outcomes, both research results and policy decisions, are grounded in science, not in special interests that ignore the scientific process. We need to know that science that is uncomfortable for the government is not muzzled.

Scientists must not only be allowed to speak up during the course of their research but also be allowed to speak freely to the media and the public, or as the motion states, “with limited and publicly stated exceptions”. Scientists will always remain the best spokespeople for their own work, and barring rare instances where information is highly sensitive it is essential that they be able to communicate their expertise to the media and to the public. Members of the media must have timely access to federal scientists. This process is routine among federal scientists working for our closest ally, the United States.

Since the Conservatives came to power in 2006, there has been a tightening of media protocols for federal scientists. Some scientists say an iron curtain has descended across the federal service. Researchers who once would have responded freely and promptly to journalists are required to direct inquiries to a media relations office, which demands written questions in advance and still might not permit scientists to speak. Federal scientists are under growing surveillance and control. Many studies have shown a pattern of suppression, manipulation and distortion of federal science. Canadian journalists have documented numerous cases in which prominent researchers have been prevented from discussing published, peer-reviewed articles or only discussing after a journalist's deadline has passed, on climate change, on an unprecedented loss of ozone over the Arctic, on viral infections in salmon. This is not just theory, these are discoveries, paid for by Canadians, that tell us that Canadian environments are changing. Why would the government want to work so hard to prevent Canadians from knowing this?

New policies that muzzle scientists and slow or prevent them from speaking to Canadians corrodes confidence in our democracy. In the past, journalists were generally able to contact scientists directly for interviews. Now scientists have to get pre-approval from their minister's office before speaking to the national or international media. Shockingly, in one case from 2014, a request from *The Canadian Press* to speak to federal government scientist Max Bothwell about his work on algae led to a 110-page email exchange to and from 16 different federal government communications officers. Perhaps the scrutiny was because of a possible link to climate change.

There have also been reports of restrictions on scientists being able to travel to conferences to share their results. Some international scientists have even voiced concerns that working with Canadian scientists will affect their own ability to speak freely about research results. This has broader implications for Canada's prospects as an international partner, and I hear about a “broader chill”.

● (1035)

There is the case of a minister not being able to define a simple scientific term that is part of the core work of his or her department but knowing what scientist's funding has been pulled, federal scientists being pressured to shut down non-governmental organizations' advocacy work, and even young researchers who are not in the federal service being pressured to stop what is termed “activist activities”. All are afraid to come forward for fear of losing their job or their funding.

I can personally attest to scientists' increased fear around doing their jobs. I used to consult for Environment Canada, and I have numerous friends who are scientists across Canada and the United States. Because of the fear of retribution if they speak out, Canadian scientists often ask me to speak to American colleagues, who can freely comment on what is happening in Canada. I had one friend who was so concerned that he or she wrote to me from a spouse's email account to my old university email account and then explained that he or she would call on the spouse's cellphone from a busy mall so that the call could not be traced.

Surely, everyone in the House should be outraged by the climate in which our scientists are being forced to perform. Surely, everyone should be outraged by the quashing of dissenting opinions and by the war on science.

*Nature* magazine, one of the world's leading journals, has reported that the government's policy directives confirm its little understanding of the importance of the free flow of scientific knowledge. The journal reported that, “...rather than address the matter, the Canadian government seems inclined to stick with its restrictive course and ride out all objections.”

Following the symposium “Unmuzzling Government Scientists: How To Re-Open the Discourse”, the Conservatives' media policies were centre stage in the international spotlight. According to *Nature*, “The way forward is clear: it is time for the Canadian government to set its scientists free.”

We used to be praised internationally for our openness, and now we are seen as a pariah.

*Business of Supply*

Today, members of the Conservative government will repeatedly deny claims of political interference in public science. They will try to deflect from the issues at hand. They will claim that scientists are able to share their research with Canadians, but the evidence and the facts say otherwise. A study by Evidence For Democracy and Simon Fraser University gives media policies governing science-based departments a C- on average for how well they facilitate open communication between scientists and the media. Moreover, a survey last year of 4,000 Canadian scientists found that 74% thought that the sharing of government science findings with the Canadian public had become too restrictive.

Scientists, the media and Canadians themselves have taken note of the Conservative government's chilling war on science. Hundreds of scientists even staged a mock funeral procession in Ottawa to protest Conservative government policies that they claim are causing "the death of evidence". There have also been open letters written by science organizations, journalists and a group of international scientists calling for the unmuzzling of scientists. A letter signed by more than 800 scientists from 32 countries asked the Prime Minister to end "burdensome restrictions on scientific communication and collaboration faced by Canadian government scientists".

Every Canadian has a vested interest in public science. We cannot accept policies that undermine government transparency and accountability and stifle communication. Canadians absolutely have the right to know about the research that is being funded by their own tax dollars and how this research might be used in other contexts.

I am proud to support today's Liberal motion to unmuzzle science. Our party believes in the importance and value of evidence-based policy-making and the expertise of our public servants, federal scientists and researchers. We must ensure that policy-makers have the right facts so that they can best serve Canadians.

Finally, the government must stand up for science and for scientists. It must immediately begin to unmuzzle researchers and to restore and preserve scientific integrity so that Canadians can receive the best possible policy outcomes. They deserve nothing less.

● (1040)

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague previously said, I appreciate the Liberals bringing forward this motion. It is a critical matter facing our country.

Regrettably, the previous member who spoke mentioned a good friend of mine, Dr. David Schindler, professor emeritus at the University of Alberta in the Killam Memorial Chair. Dr. Schindler at one time worked for the Government of Canada and he too left because of the repression of scientific information. He stated in a letter to the *Ottawa Citizen* in March 2010 that, "Such muzzling occurred under Conservative and Liberal administrations...as far back as the Mulroney government." I guess we remain hopeful that future Liberal regimes would reverse the policies they previously had where apparently they also limited science information being released by government scientists.

I have a question for my colleague, and I admire her as a scientist. One matter that neither she nor her colleague mentioned is an important issue for Canadian scientists, and that is the fact that now,

in order to get a federal NSERC grant, or even a Western Economic Diversification grant, an individual has to partner with one of the industry sectors in favour with the government. I wonder if she could speak to that.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, let me say I am very proud of our record when it comes to science. It was a Liberal government that did have the science adviser, and many of these changes that we have seen, particularly around muzzling, have come under the present government.

There is a war on science in this country. Science is under persistent attack in Canada, despite the fact that benefits of university research and development are \$15 billion and 150,000 to 200,000 person-years of employment each year. I will give examples. Budget 2009 cut \$148 million over three years from the federal research granting councils. Moreover, the government attempted to direct research toward subjects it perceived as priorities.

I think we have to pay attention that we have seen thousands of scientists across this country demonstrating, because evidence is being drained from decision making, and when the facts show that a policy cannot be defended, it might be better to revise the policy than suppress the facts.

● (1045)

**Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have regard for the member for Etobicoke North. We have talked on a number of issues over time, and I generally appreciate the tenor by which she presents her commentary, I think a little overcharged, if I might say, on the words "war on science", and I say that with deep respect because that is just not the case.

We heard comments from our colleagues opposite in their debate about the reference to a science officer. It was back in 2007 that our government created the Science, Technology and Innovation Council, 18 qualified experts to advise and provide the government with unbiased policy advice.

My question for my colleague opposite: When she read the last two reports of the Science, Technology and Innovation Council, was she impressed with how unbiased their presentations were?

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much my colleague from across the way, and yes, we have had many good conversations.

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Having said that, I am a scientist, and I hear from my former colleagues across Canada, across the United States and internationally. Many of my colleagues have gone to the United States because they feel that they can no longer do their work freely, that they can no longer talk to the Canadian public and to the media freely. When there has been a science issue that is breaking in Canada, it is my international colleagues who reach out to me.

Let me be very clear: We have amazing scientists in the public service. They should be allowed to do their work freely. They should be allowed to talk to the Canadian public. It is a matter of fairness. It is Canadian taxpayers who are paying for this research.

**Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to respond to comments made earlier today by the hon. members for Kingston and the Islands and for Etobicoke North, and to present information regarding the communication of our federal science and technology policy.

I have never been more proud of the commitment that our government has in research and development, and also for our strong support of science in this country.

[Translation]

The government recognizes the importance of science and technology in creating a robust and prosperous society. We have never stopped honouring this commitment with concrete measures.

[English]

I begin by providing some context. Back in 2007, we set forward our vision for science and technology in a strategy that we updated in 2014 when the Prime Minister launched “Seizing Canada's Moment: Moving Forward in Science, Technology and Innovation 2014”.

This new strategy will provide a road map for how Canada can build on its world-leading strengths and move on to new beginnings of scientific achievement, discovery, and economic success.

Guided by our science and technology strategies, we have made record investments. Since 2006, the government has invested more than \$13 billion in new funding in all facets of the innovation ecosystem, including advanced research, research infrastructure, talent development, and business innovation.

[Translation]

Furthermore, the government supports the strategic relationships among research institutions, researchers and businesses that are required to take advantage of the many opportunities arising from this ever-growing knowledge base.

[English]

We all know the role that science and technology plays in driving long-term economic growth. Prime Minister Harper said it best: “Science powers commerce.”

In our view, the role of the government is to establish policies that strengthen the science, technology, and innovation enterprise from discovery research all the way through to commercialization. As such, we have bolstered federal research that informs public policy decision-making. These investments help the government achieve key social goals, such as improving public health, ensuring safety of

foods and products, building strong and vibrant economies all across the nation, and ensuring a clean and healthy environment for future generations.

[Translation]

In accordance with the government's new science and technology strategy, we announced in economic action plan 2015 additional steps to strengthen science, technology and innovation in Canada, in particular by providing more than \$1.5 billion to advance the renewed science, technology and innovation strategy's objective.

● (1050)

[English]

I am proud to say that this government's investments have made Canada well known internationally for its research strengths, for its highly qualified personnel, and for advanced research infrastructure. In fact, Canada leads the G7 in spending on R and D in higher education.

Building on the government's historic infrastructure investments, including the new Building Canada plan, on November 24, 2014, Prime Minister Harper announced—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. This is the second time the member has used the name of a member. I did not comment the first time, but if he could be mindful of that, the Chair would appreciate it.

**Hon. Ed Holder:** Mr. Speaker, I will be respectful and mindful. I apologize.

The Prime Minister announced \$5.8 billion in investments that will continue to build and renew infrastructure and on-reserve schools across the country. This unprecedented and historic investment in public infrastructure will ensure Canada's future economic growth for years to come.

The ability to invest such a substantial amount of funding in infrastructure is a direct result of the government's responsible actions to return to fiscal balance.

[Translation]

In the Prime Minister's announcement in November, \$380 million was set aside for building or renovating federal laboratories in Canada, so that employees have access to state-of-the-art facilities to help create jobs and stimulate economic growth, all while improving their productivity.

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[English]

In addition, economic action plan 2015 proposes to provide resources totalling \$243.5 million over 10 years to enable Canadian access to and participation in the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope. As announced by the Prime Minister on April 6, 2015, this funding is building on Canada's scientific leadership, securing a viewing share for Canadian researchers at the Thirty Meter Telescope in partnership with the United States, Japan, China, and India. This investment will help maintain Canadian scientific leadership in astronomy and will help Canadian companies create and maintain high-quality jobs in communities across Canada.

Investments in science and technology must include investing in people. We want Canada to be a place where curiosity is encouraged, a place where our youth are inspired by science, technology, and innovation, a place where the world's best and brightest minds come to push the frontiers of knowledge and make groundbreaking technology advancements to help Canada succeed in the global economy.

Our government is very aware that it is important not only to perform world class research but also to communicate the results. That is why we are committed to ensuring that federally funded scientific research is shared widely with Canadians. We regularly promote and encourage media and public access to our scientists. We remain committed to promoting the great work of our scientists and staff and to raising awareness of the importance of science and technology in the lives of Canadians.

[Translation]

Government of Canada experts regularly answer calls from journalists and participate in public activities in which they introduce themselves and talk about their jobs. Furthermore, departments proactively work with Canadian and international media to write articles on these experts.

[English]

What is more, our government encourages scientists to share their findings by publishing articles and by conducting interviews with the media. Their findings are also shared at scientific conferences at home and abroad and are made widely available to other scientists, to Canadians, and to scientific communities around the world.

According to figures from the Observatoire des sciences et des technologies, Canadian federal departments and agencies have averaged over 4,000 publications in the natural sciences and engineering fields annually. This number has been increasing, and in 2011 federal researchers published over 10% more publications in these fields than they did five years earlier. In 2014, for example, the National Research Council participated in approximately 370 media interviews, and its scientists published more than 729 scientific articles. In addition, Environment Canada gave over 4,100 interviews with subject matter experts and scientists last year alone.

[Translation]

Furthermore, last year, Fisheries and Oceans Canada received 713 interview requests related to scientific questions and participated in 647 media interviews. That means that more than 91% of interview requests were granted. Furthermore, Fisheries and Oceans

Canada responded in writing to 1,406 media inquiries on the sciences.

● (1055)

[English]

I would also like to point to our busy colleagues over at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, who published more than 3,000 science articles, and to our friends at Natural Resources Canada, who gave 472 interviews to reporters to discuss research results and findings.

I share this with the House, through all of these numbers, to make it very clear that this is about fact-based responsibility and fact-based reporting to this House. Our departments are also active online and in social media, promoting our science and our scientists through science.gc.ca and through Twitter accounts such as @CANADA-quakes and @SpaceWeatherCA.

I would note that all departments and agencies must ensure that all communications activities conform to the requirements of the communications policy of the Government of Canada. The policy states that institutions must facilitate information or interview requests from the media and ensure processes are in place in responding to media calls. It also directs departments and agencies to cultivate proactive relations with the media and to promptly address their inquiries.

Since the policy came into effect in 2002, ministers have been designated as the principal spokespersons of the Government of Canada. The communications policy of the Government of Canada also states that institutions must consult their minister's office when preparing a response to a media inquiry that could have implications for the minister, whereas media requests for technical information on specialized subjects are often directed to knowledgeable managers or staff designated to speak as representatives of their institution.

[Translation]

The government is extremely proud of the world-class work our scientists and researchers are doing. Their work plays an integral role in shaping the government's policies and decisions. These researchers' work is helping Canada achieve its primary social objectives, such as improving public health, ensuring food safety and product safety, creating a strong and vibrant economy, and protecting our environment for future generations.

[English]

Beyond supporting the dissemination of research findings through the media and scholarly channels, the government has launched initiatives to make federally funded scientific research and data more widely available to Canadians. A good example is the Open Data portal, which provides free access to thousands of government data sets and to various websites, such as science.gc.ca, that highlight the work of federal scientists.

What is more, we will advance open science policies and practices for publicly funded research by increasing public access to the results of government-funded research. This is part of a government-wide initiative to broaden the breadth and depth of information available through the action plan on open government. The reach of science across the federal public service and the opportunities to create new value through big data and other trends around the future of science demonstrate a strong need for a collective approach to define, develop, and integrate open science.

[*Translation*]

As a result of greater collaboration among the scientific community and private and public sectors, as well as increased engagement, we expect open science policies to make it easier for people to access publications and scientific and technical data.

[*English*]

In particular, our government has already implemented a tri-agency open access policy, formally launched in February of 2015, requiring that the results of federally funded research through the granting councils be made available within 12 months of publication.

Furthermore, we are committed to making available an online consolidated list of recently published research authored by federal scientists and will develop and implement policies to promote open access to federal science. As well, we have invested \$3 million over three years in the Canadian Digital Media Network to create the open data institute. The institute will play a pivotal role in aggregating large data sets, informing the development of interoperability standards, and stimulating the commercialization of new data-driven apps.

In September 2014, science-based departments and agencies and the granting agencies agreed to a common federal open science commitment to be part of the Treasury Board's open government action plan 2.0 announced in November 2014. Led by my colleague, the hon. President of the Treasury Board, the action plan on open government will further open access to federal research and support openness and transparency. The initiative will provide Canadians with greater opportunity to learn about and participate in government, drive innovation and economic opportunities for all Canadians, and at the same time create a more cost-effective, efficient, and responsive government.

• (1100)

The government is committed to taking measures based on open data initiatives focused on stimulating our digital economy and the free flow of useful and usable data.

Seizing open science opportunities and addressing challenges require a consistent, coordinated, long-term culture change with a whole-of-government approach. In addition, in order to mobilize knowledge from the lab to the marketplace, to address business challenges, and to seize new societal opportunities, we have built bridges between businesses of all sizes—universities, colleges, polytechnics, federal researchers—and we will encourage closer connections between the public and private sectors. This will empower firms to leverage their investments in R and D by seeking

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solutions with universities, colleges, polytechnics, and government laboratories.

[*Translation*]

I can assure all hon. members that the government will continue to work with its partners to implement these measures in a timely manner so that research institutions and businesses can take advantage of the opportunities and to maximize the benefits for Canadians.

[*English*]

By fostering innovation, our government is building greater partnerships among business and the research community to help companies compete and win in the global marketplace.

Science, technology, and innovation comprise the foundation of Canada's high standard of living and create growth, jobs, and long-term prosperity. Federal scientists and researchers contribute to these endeavours every day, and our government truly values the role they play. We are committed to communicating the results of their ingenuity, dedication, and hard work to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Canada enjoys an enviable reputation when it comes to our scientific and technological contributions and recent major investments to promote R and D. We can take pride in the fact that we have some of the brightest researchers in the world, particularly in our federal laboratories.

[*English*]

Canadian researchers are very active, producing more top-cited scientific articles than most industrialized countries. We clearly punch above our weight: with less than 0.5% of the world's population, Canada produces over 4% of the world's research papers and nearly 5% of the world's most frequently cited papers. Canada leads the G7 in research and development performed by a higher education sector as a share of gross domestic product and is the only G7 country that increased its share of the world's published papers in the last decade.

[*Translation*]

That is wonderful.

[*English*]

Over the past few years, reports show that Canadian science and technology is healthy, growing, and recognized around the world for its excellence, behind just the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, and we are fast approaching them.

[*Translation*]

The government is committed to capitalizing on these successes and further strengthening the Canadian scientific community in an open and transparent manner.

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[English]

We have made record investments and bolstered federal research that inform sound decisions on public policy, we have supported people and we have encouraged openness. The world-class research of federal scientists and researchers help us to achieve our key goals. We have taken action because we are committed to supporting science and technology, through the conduct of high-quality research and open sharing, to improve the quality of life for Canadians.

I have had the opportunity to cross the country in the last 14 months in my role as Minister of State for Science and Technology. I praise our scientists and researchers for the great quality of work they do, for the things that matter in the country. They make Canada so proud. I wish the opposition would come join us to just talk about how proud we are of the great things these scientists and researchers have accomplished.

In my hometown of London, Ontario, which is the 10th largest city in Canada, is the home of Sir Frederick Banting. One night, in the middle of the night, he woke up and declared 25 words that would change the world. Those words were the formula for insulin. How appropriate that today is Diabetes Day on the Hill. Grant Maltman from the Banting House Museum will have the opportunity not only to showcase Sir Frederick Banting, but the great work Canadian researchers and scientists do. What Dr. Banting did with Dr. Best was so incredible and it has saved millions of lives. This is what we do in Canada.

I have had the honour to visit facilities like TRIUMF, Communtech and SNOLAB. If members visit these facilities, they will see science at its very best. These people are not shy to share their views. In fact, more important, is that they are proud to talk about what they do on behalf of the Government of Canada. What the federal researchers do is unprecedented in the calibre of their work. I have shared some of the statistics about how we punch so much above our weight in the number of publications that are cited, and that can only make one very proud.

I am pleased that members opposite brought this topic forward, not because of the description of the topic but because it gives us the chance to highlight not only the great work our scientists do, but also the work of the Prime Minister and this government in supporting, in unprecedented fashion through policy and financial support, the great work they do across the country. I could not be more proud as Minister of State for Science and Technology to thank our great scientists for their work. I know the House will join me when I say, "God bless you. Thank you for the great work you do. You change lives".

● (1105)

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of State for Science and Technology says "Thank you" to all Canadian scientists and maybe I will start by saying "You're welcome", on behalf of the four research scientists in the Liberal Party caucus.

However, as research scientists, we get approached by other scientists who tell us the stories of how their work is impeded by the communications policy of the government, or how some guy comes up to me on the street in Kingston and tells me how the conclusions

of his research paper were reworted before it was submitted for publication.

The real evidence came out last week by the Professional Institute of the Public Service Canada. This union represents scientists who work for the federal government. It decided to forgo an emphasis on any other ask that a union might make for its members in collective bargaining and instead asked for a scientific integrity package.

Why are scientists so upset about the government's communications policy, about muzzling of federal government scientists?

**Hon. Ed Holder:** Mr. Speaker, for all the scientists both within the Liberal Party and throughout the House, on behalf of our government I thank them for the quality of work they have done in past. Now that they are in politics, they get to bring another sense of wisdom, I suppose, to the House, and it makes us stronger.

It is rather interesting. The member made reference to the communications policy of the Government of Canada. I might remind the member that the policy actually was established in 2002 when the Liberal Party was in power. I share that with the member, not because it was a bad policy but it was the right thing to do at the time, and it is the right thing to do now. While ministers are the primary spokespersons for government departments, government scientists and experts are readily available to share their research with the media and the public. It is from that standpoint that I would agree the policy made sense in 2002, and it makes sense today.

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of State for Science and Technology would agree with me that the buck stops with him when it comes to science in our country and that it is important for him to have a firm grasp on his file or he is not doing his job.

I would like to ask him a question about science and technology employment in the federal government. In 2011, Treasury Board and Statistics Canada reported that 39,189 researchers were employed by the Government of Canada. Last year, there were 35,189. That number has been cut by 4,000. We have lost 4,000 scientists and researchers, or 10% of our entire workforce.

Could the minister confirm these numbers and perhaps explain why they have happened?

● (1110)

**Hon. Ed Holder:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and me have certainly had discussions in the past with respect to my file.

It is rather interesting. There are scientists who work for the federal government and scientists who work for post-secondary institutions and research institutes across the country. There is certainly mobility in those areas.

Let me respond in this way. When I spoke about the commitment that we had made to science in our country, I mentioned the \$13 billion towards research, development, innovation, infrastructure and Canadian talent.

In economic action plan 2014, the Hon. Jim Flaherty announced \$1.5 billion of legacy funding to develop, within our post-secondary institutions, world-leading research. This year the ask we had was to provide strong research support in terms of infrastructure. We added to that \$1.3 billion for infrastructure.

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Those are the kinds of commitments we make to support the scientists who are there. Frankly, with that kind of a commitment in place, I look forward to science being alive and strong for decades to come.

**Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as someone who has a university in my riding and whose first degree was a science degree, I very much appreciate what the minister has done.

The minister, in his previous response and also in his speech, talked about some of the investments the government had made. Could the minister break down what specifically was done in the 2015 budget as far as investments in new research? He had organized it in a variety of fashions in his speech. Could he specifically zero in on what has been done in the 2015 budget?

**Hon. Ed Holder:** Mr. Speaker, economic action plan 2015 was a significant year for science. We have done so many things with respect to supporting science in our country.

I have already made reference in broad terms to the \$13 billion that we have committed since 2006, but specific to this year let me talk about the Canada Foundation for Innovation. We received that request to support advanced research infrastructure across the country. Therefore, \$1.33 billion has been committed, which includes \$100 million for the digital research innovation program and \$105 million for Canary.

The 30-metre telescope that members would have heard me comment on, from our standpoint, plays to Canada's world-leading strength in astronomy and astrophysics. We have committed some \$243.5 million to support this project, which will bring the best of our astronomers and the science this brings to them as well.

There is our support of Mitacs, of TRIUMF, of the Council of Canadian Academies, and it goes on. If I get the opportunity, I will continue to talk about those numbers. It is an impressive list.

I am very proud of our government, our Minister of Finance and our Prime Minister for ensuring that science remains strong in our country. It is unprecedented.

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Mr. Speaker, I placed on the order paper a question about the government's claim of \$13 billion in new funding. Actually I did that a little while ago. The amount of \$11.8 billion was quoted many times in the House last year.

What I found was that many of the items in this list that added up to \$11 billion were actually compensated by cuts somewhere else. For example, increases to funding for NRC IRAP was funded by cutting the scientific research and experimental development credit; increases in funding to the granting council, we know that funding has not increased after inflation. This \$13 billion does not take into account inflation. It does not take into account cuts to other programs, cuts to scientific research and experimental development tax credits.

That \$13 billion number is a bogus number, but I want to give my hon. colleague a chance to respond to that.

**Hon. Ed Holder:** Mr. Speaker, because the hon. member gives me the chance to do so, I will carry on with some of the other strong supports we have done because that \$13 billion is very real money.

The member made reference to IRAP. When the Jenkins panel was we convened to totally transform the National Research Council in a very transformative way to ensure that it was research-driven and research-focussed, we doubled our support for IRAP.

When I go around the country and attend round tables and interviews, the comments I get about IRAP and our doubling of support for it is unprecedented. It is well received because it matters to people on the ground. With those funds, we take entrepreneurs who have ideas and combine them with the great staff at the NRC. Through all of that we are able to get the best out of our local area businesses. I am greatly impressed with the work of the National Research Council.

Since the member brought up the issue of our support, we have added another \$45 million for TRIUMF to support its world-leading physics research and international partnerships, I have been there and I have seen the work it does. Regarding the college and community innovation program, we have provided an additional \$5 million annually to support its collaboration between colleges and industries on research and development projects. We have put new investments into international science and technology partnerships with other countries around the world. That is the commitment we make for science in our country. I could not be more proud of the work that is done.

• (1115)

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

It is my pleasure to rise today and speak on this Liberal motion on science brought forward by the distinguished member for Kingston and the Islands. Of course, we will be supporting the motion.

Before I continue, I would like to say how sorry I am that the member will not be standing in the upcoming election. His is an experienced and welcome voice for science, which is especially welcome in this Parliament where science seems to be constantly under attack.

Turning to the motion itself, it has two parts. The first part is about principles, and the second part is about propositions.

In terms of principles, the motion calls for the House to recognize that the Conservative government is wrongly muzzling government scientists and researchers and keeping valuable information from the public. We agree with the Liberals that this is the case and that it is happening here. It is also the case that this is the wrong thing to do.

The Conservative government has essentially waged a war on the scientific community and holds great disdain for data and evidence that do not support its ideologically driven policies. The Conservatives deny this, as we have heard here from the minister of state, but the public knows this to be true, and scientists know this to be true, which explains their protest on Parliament Hill and constant protests across the country.

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In addition to muzzling, the Conservative government has slashed more than \$1.1 billion from federal science budgets since 2011, and as I mentioned earlier, fired 4,000 federal researchers over this same time period. If this is not a war on science, I cannot imagine what one would look like.

In 2011, the government employed 39,189 researchers across all departments and agencies. This is not in universities or the private sector, but in government departments and agencies. This number has been slashed to 35,189, which is a drop of 4,000 researchers. Therefore, in an age where science is king, the government in its wisdom has chopped 10% of our total government research capacity. I submit that this is madness.

While we support the motion and its principles, I have to note that the NDP itself has had opposition day motions on this same topic, twice. I suspect, unfortunately, that we will get the same result today with the Conservatives voting against any kind of motion that would bolster science in Canada.

Turning to the propositions, the meat of this motion is that the government should immediately create a chief science officer. In my reading of the motion, and as the comments earlier today suggested, this position would be very similar to that of the national science advisor to the prime minister, which was put in place by the Martin government in 2004 and then abolished by the Conservative government in 2008. This position was held only by Dr. Arthur Carty, who served well in this position. However, the position only provided private information to the cabinet on scientific issues. It was not really a champion for science in Canada. It was a stream of additional advice for decision-making within the executive.

In my mind, such a position is much preferable to what we have now, but it does not really take us where we need to go. I have made my thoughts on this matter clear in two proposals currently in front of the House.

The first proposal is Motion No. 453 on scientific integrity, which is based on the need to develop new government communication policies that encourage scientists to speak freely to the media; allow scientists to present viewpoints beyond their scientific research and incorporate their expert opinions, as long as they indicate they are not speaking on behalf of or representing a department or agency; ensure communications officers do not restrict, limit, or prevent scientists from responding to media requests; prohibit public affairs or communications officers from directing federal scientists to suppress or alter their findings, and we have heard examples today of this happening under the Conservative government; and affirm the right of federal scientists to approve the final version of any proposed publication that represents their scientific opinion.

This motion on scientific integrity comes directly from the Office of Science and Technology Policy that President Obama has in place. One of his first actions as president was to help science grow in the United States.

The second proposal, the bill I have in front of Parliament, Bill C-558, is the parliamentary science officer act, which is a much stronger version of what is proposed here today. It is modelled on our Parliamentary Budget Officer, the U.K.'s Parliamentary Office of

Science and Technology, and the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy.

• (1120)

This bill would establish an independent agent of Parliament with a mandate to assess scientific evidence relevant to any proposal or bill before Parliament; answer requests from committees and individual members for unbiased scientific information; conduct independent analysis of federal science and technology; raise awareness of scientific issues across government; and encourage coordination between departments and agencies conducting scientific research.

I would say it is almost an auditor general for science that we, the official opposition, are proposing, whereas the Liberals are again returning to a position we once had that was easily abolished in 2008. We do not think it is strong enough and secure enough, so we need to move to a more 21st century solution to the problems we are facing.

I think my friend will agree—his motion speaks to this—that as science goes in this country so does our economy. The Conservatives' only plan for economic growth is to really triple the production of export of raw bitumen by ramming pipelines through communities at whatever the cost. This plan is now falling to bits due to low oil prices and the realization that many communities will not be bullied into accepting pipelines.

At the same time, our national investment in research and development is plummeting. Whereas natural resources are an important part of our economy, of course our future growth will be in the knowledge economy, rewarding and helping it grow. However, things are going in the opposite direction under the current government. Where investment in research and development was never stellar under the Liberals, overall R and D investment has fallen to just 1.62% of our overall GDP. Compare that to competitor countries like South Korea, where 5¢ out of every dollar in that economy is plugged back into research. In Europe and the U.S., it is 3¢ on every dollar. In Canada we are spending less than a third of what they spend in South Korea, and compared to most of our other competitor countries, we are spending less than half.

We are falling behind under the current government because it is destroying our culture of discovery. That is what is happening here. Muzzling scientists is part of it, but chopping all of these researchers and money is really killing our culture of discovery in Canada. It is cutting and firing its way to the bottom of the international tables, which is a real shame. Future generations will really pay for this.

In a 2004 position paper, the Royal Society of Canada stated:

...we are in danger of slipping behind our competitors in our support of research and thereby losing our competitive edge...

We recommend that research funding in Canada should increase at least to the average level in the OECD and G8 countries.

*Business of Supply*

We advise the government to develop a ten-year plan for research, innovation and skill development....

I would like to bring to the attention of the House a unanimous motion that was passed at our 2013 national NDP convention, to show why the NDP is leading on this issue.

The motion that was unanimously passed by 2,000 delegates states:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the NDP consult widely...developing a Made in Canada National Science Strategy;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NDP move to match the percentage of GDP invested by the public and private sectors in research and development (GERD) as found in other global leading countries such as the United States.

While I agree with the principles that my colleague has put forward, I think the solutions need to be more robust. With what I have outlined in my speech, the scientific integrity motion, the parliamentary science officer bill, and the motion we passed on the national science strategy at our national convention, we have met these challenges and we will put them in place while we are in government.

Let us be ambitious. Let us think big. Let us be a world leader and not a world laggard.

•(1125)

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from British Columbia for his speech. He is always worth listening to. I guess he has the advantage that he is running again.

I disagree with very little of what my colleague said in his speech. However, I differ a bit, and he may not even disagree with what I will say now. I think it is important to realize that the parliamentary science officer he is proposing is somebody who is accountable to Parliament, who works with Parliament. He mentioned that it was more like the auditor general position, so it is more of an after-the-fact investigation, whereas if the Prime Minister and cabinet are making decisions in real time, I think it is very important to have private and timely advice perhaps on a day-to-day basis, where the ministers, the cabinet, and the Prime Minister can confer with a scientific advisor in confidence so that everybody can speak freely and so that all of the information can get out.

In my opinion, both are important. The member's proposal for a parliamentary science advisor is a valuable one, and the work of this body would be much better if it were properly informed in that way, but I also think that cabinet decisions would be better if they were informed by a science advisor.

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart:** Mr. Speaker, I think we both agree that it would be much better if the cabinet listened to scientists, instead of muzzling them. Again, that is the strength of this motion today and our ability to open up the debate.

The reason I compare the parliamentary science officer to the Auditor General is that the office would be afforded the same protections as the Auditor General in the sense that the person in this position could not be arbitrarily fired by the government. The person would work for parliamentarians. The position would provide proactive research by replying to requests from committees and individual parliamentarians.

For example, the other side of the House denies that climate change is happening, and on this side of the House we know that it is happening and that we have to address it. A parliamentary science officer could bring the science forward, by request, to show the other side that climate change is happening and that we have to do something about it.

**Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was a little shocked by the member's remarks. If I heard him correctly, he said not only that scientists should be able to speak about anything they might be working on within government but that they should be able to opine on any policy that might strike their fancy, as long as they say they are not speaking for the department.

Let us carry that a little bit further. Supposing any officers of departments, any bureaucrats, or any public officials decide they have something to say on a public issue, and they stand up and join the debate on public policy, which is usually confined to the House of Commons. We have a convention in this country of a neutral, objective public service that provides neutral advice to the government. Now, people would be standing in this place, so to speak, giving their opinions on this, that, and the other thing.

Does the member really think that this would be an enhancement of our democratic process? What about the neutrality of our public service?

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart:** Mr. Speaker, again, the question underlines the attitude on that side of the House.

The scientific integrity directive that I put before the House comes from other G8 countries where, as I just pointed out, investment in research and development is double or almost triple the investment here. They are fostering the culture of innovation and discovery in these countries by allowing their scientists to speak freely, while we stifle ours, and our economy is suffering for it.

•(1130)

[Translation]

**Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to comment on the Liberal Party's opposition motion on science in Canada.

The motion calls on the government to rescind all rules and regulations that muzzle government scientists; consolidate government-funded or -created science so that it is easily available to the public at large through a central portal; create a Chief Science Officer whose mandate would include ensuring that government science is freely available to those who are paying for it, namely, the public; and allow scientists to be able to speak freely on their work with limited and publicly stated exceptions.

I am delighted to support this motion because it covers most of the scientific community's key demands of the government.

*Business of Supply*

Let us remember that the NDP already presented two opposition motions: the first, on June 5, 2012, condemned cuts to science and the muzzling of scientists; the second, on March 20, 2013, urged the government to support the NDP plan for scientific integrity.

This subject is particularly timely today considering that the ACFAS conference will be held this week in Rimouski. This is the Francophonie's most important scientific event. Those in attendance all agree that the scientific community is stunned at the federal government's attitude toward research.

The president of ACFAS, Louise Dandurand, condemned the budget cuts and job losses in the sciences, and had very harsh words for the fact that federal government scientists cannot communicate with their peers.

She said:

Science is built on the exchanges among researchers. The fact that government scientists cannot communicate with their peers, either in Canada or abroad, impoverishes the very essence of science.

She also said:

The federal government's unenlightened approach is unfortunate and dangerous, and the consequences for the advancement of science will be felt in the long term in Canada.

Another message coming out of the ACFAS conference is the importance of advancing science done in French. In an interview with the *Devoir* this week, that was the message of the honorary chair of the 83rd ACFAS conference, who is none other than Rémy Quirion, the chief scientist for Quebec.

However, the Conservative government is refusing to listen. It closed a dozen scientific libraries, including the only French library at Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The government has also imposed restrictions and even prohibitions on communications about scientific work, even after the research has been published.

Last week, the testimony of Steve Campana, a former scientist at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, confirmed what we have known for years: the government forces scientists to go through a complicated process to be able to talk to the media, and requests for interviews are often denied.

The Conservatives have also prevented federal scientists from taking part in scientific conferences to share the results of their research, thereby obstructing our international collaboration.

In 2013, the NDP moved a motion to end the muzzling of scientists once and for all. Motion M-453 would allow scientists to speak publicly about their work and would prohibit ministerial staff from unduly limiting media access or suppressing scientific results.

I also want to talk about the research imbalance the Conservative government has created. Since 2012, the government has overhauled its innovation assistance programs, which translates into eliminating support for basic research in order to focus only on business-led research.

Research currently being done in Quebec is essentially non-directed research. It represents 86% of all scientific research done in Quebec. It is especially important to support this type of research because in science, we never know where the next discovery will come from.

The Conservatives' approach will not only eliminate the first component of the mission of the National Research Council, established in 1916 to support research and the development of commercial innovation, but it will also have a disastrous impact on our scientific heritage and on science that is done for the public good.

• (1135)

That is why the NDP has been proposing that the government create the position of chief science officer since 2013. Prominent members of the scientific community support the NDP's proposal to ensure that federal scientists are no longer muzzled and to give Parliament impartial scientific information. Let us remember that, in 2012, the Government of Quebec decided to appoint a chief science officer. Some countries, such as England, have had this type of watchdog for about 50 years. About a dozen countries have chief science officers, but Canada does not have such a watchdog at the federal level.

What is more, this week, the Institut de la statistique du Québec, or ISQ, is expected to table a damning report on the damage caused by the elimination of the mandatory long form census. If research suffers, so does the quality of government decisions. Here are a few questions that we need reliable statistics to answer. Where should we build new day care centres? Has the state of rental apartments improved? Are the economic aid programs for the regions working? These questions will remain unanswered without proper statistics.

The ISQ's study also shows that the national household survey, which replaced the census in 2011, is unreliable and more expensive to use. At the time, the government justified this change by saying that it was protecting people's privacy. That is rather ironic given that this same Conservative government introduced Bill C-51. Five years later, former chief statistician Munir Sheikh, who resigned in protest against the government's decision, is saying that it is impossible to rely on the new survey.

A joke that is going around the scientific community sums up the situation best. "Guess what? Canada managed to eliminate poverty. How did it do that? By simply eliminating the mandatory census."

Alain Bélanger an expert in population studies, language and immigration at the INRS said:

For the past five years, I have been wondering whether I should continue to conduct social science research or I should stop. The data for all of the subjects that interest me are skewed.

We cannot allow science in Canada to continue its free fall.

At a conference in Halifax in 2014, Peter Nicholson, the deputy chief of staff for policy in the Office of the Prime Minister of Canada from 2003 to 2006 and the former special advisor to the Secretary-General of the OECD, said:

This is a portrait of unmanaged decline that began with the previous Liberal administration. It really does signal a vacuum of leadership and it's a very serious problem because we definitely need a healthy and well-motivated scientific capacity to support the mandates of government departments and agencies.

*Business of Supply*

I would remind members that the 1995 budget announced some significant cuts to science and technology spending, even though Paul Martin, the finance minister at the time, had promised to spare the councils and agencies that provide grants for university research in science, engineering, medicine and social sciences.

Under the Liberals, the industry portfolio was very hard hit, losing 42% of its program spending over two years. The abolition of the highly acclaimed defence industry productivity program had a huge impact on the aerospace industry. University scientific research suffered a 25% drop in funding in constant dollars. The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, which subsidizes university research, had its budget cut by 14%. The Canadian Space Agency lost 15% of its budget.

We need a government that will invest in science and technology in Canada. This is not just about discovery and the pursuit of excellence. This is also about social justice, democracy, our heritage and our scientific future. Instead of mortgaging that future, the NDP will stand up for science and scientific integrity.

I would just like to add a comment on the Conservative government's budget for this year. The government had an opportunity to repair the damage it did to science in Canada.

• (1140)

Unfortunately, it did not change its approach, and it is continuing to invest solely in business-led research. The government's approach is not working when it comes to protecting Canadians' health and environment, and it is not working for Canada's economy or for industry either. We are in dire need of a change, and that is why I support this motion.

**Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the hon. member's speech. I have a few questions for her.

Is the NDP ready to vote in favour of the major investments laid out in budget 2015, or will it put its politics first? I would also like to ask the member why the NDP always votes against every budget that makes major investments in science, technology and the environment. Will it continue to vote against these important investments?

**Ms. Laurin Liu:** Mr. Speaker, that question ignores the facts. We know that the government has made cuts to research and to development funding in Canada. My colleague from Burnaby—Douglas quoted some of the figures in his speech earlier. As we know, many scientists have been laid off from federal departments such as Environment Canada and Fisheries and Oceans. We also know that investments in research and development, and even in industrial research, are declining.

My colleague said that the facts should take precedence over ideology. That is precisely the problem: the Conservative government is basing its decisions on ideology, muzzling scientists and impeding any scientific research that flies in the face of its own ideology and decisions. That is why the Information Commissioner is currently investigating this Conservative government's muzzling of scientists.

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. As we just said, the Conservatives have

slashed over \$1 billion from science budgets, and over 4,000 research positions have been eliminated.

How does political interference in scientific communication undermine our researchers and democracy in general?

**Ms. Laurin Liu:** Mr. Speaker, first, it is Canadian citizens who are paying for this scientific research. We believe that the Canadian public absolutely must have access to this scientific data and the results of this research. It is important for democracy and for maintaining healthy public debate. It is equally important for Canadians to have access to the results of that research.

We know that this is affecting our ability to collaborate internationally. *Nature*, a very reputable magazine, has denounced this Conservative government's approach to scientific integrity and the fact that it is muzzling Canada's scientists. We have also heard testimony from international scientists who complained about not being able to communicate with their Canadian counterparts and how this jeopardized Canada's collaboration in other international research projects.

**Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I had the opportunity to attend the International Open Data Conference being held here in Ottawa. We keep hearing that the government is committed to open data. On paper it has a wonderful program, but in reality there is a culture of secrecy that goes with it. Data is not published, scientists are muzzled, and information does not reach the public. It is truly a major problem. That is what today's motion is all about.

I would like to know what my colleague opposite has to say about the government's plan for open data, which exists on paper, but not in reality.

**Ms. Laurin Liu:** Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague is working very hard on this issue.

It is vital that we have open data in Canada, because that allows us to innovate in the areas of health, the environment and the protection of Canadians, and it also makes economic advancement and innovation possible. Small businesses can have more data to help them produce new applications and new products.

Therefore, it is an essential tool for Canada's business community. Unfortunately, this community has been very much neglected by the current government. First, the government abolished the mandatory long form census, which negatively impacts Canada's business climate. Furthermore, even with the government's unbalanced approach, industrial investment in research and development has declined. In fact, Canada has dropped from 16th to 22nd place among OECD countries for industrial investment.

*Business of Supply*

•(1145)

[English]

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the need to base public policy on reliable evidence and for the public to have access to that evidence and to understand it is an issue that I have advocated for passionately during my entire political career. I am proud to speak today in support of the Liberal motion before the House.

The thrust of the motion is simple: scientists should be able to discuss their research findings publicly, in a timely manner, and without political interference. Unfortunately, that is not the current reality for scientists working for, or sometimes even with, the federal public service in Canada.

As the motion states, the government has constrained the ability of federal scientists to share their research and to collaborate with their peers, and federal scientists have been muzzled and prevented from speaking to the media about their work.

[Translation]

François Giroux, head of the information and communication program at Université de Moncton, eloquently explained the danger of this approach when he spoke to the media today:

The danger of this practice is that by controlling the message, you kill it. The health of our democratic society requires transparency on the part of our governments. The very existence of governments is funded by taxpayers.

...Free access to government information requires a transparent government, freedom of the press, as well as freedom of speech in the case of a subsidized organization, a scientist or an elected representative.

[English]

According to the shocking findings of a 2013 Professional Institute of Public Service of Canada survey, hundreds of federal scientists have been asked to alter or exclude technical information from documents, and hundreds more have been prevented from responding to inquiries from media and/or the public.

The Conservative government has demonstrated a clear pattern of cutting off the flow of information when it does not support its rigidly ideological agenda. In fact, within months of coming to power, the Conservative government introduced new, strict procedures to constrain how government scientists are allowed to speak about their research to the media.

[Translation]

Unmuzzling science does not mean that federal scientists should be free to speak without any restrictions. They know very well that their work often deals with sensitive security issues or is protected by property rights.

[English]

However, scientists are now micromanaged by their minister's offices regarding how, or even if, they can discuss their work with the public. The tragic consequence of the government's disturbing pattern of constraining federal scientists' ability to share their research and to collaborate with their peers is that Canada's global leadership role in basic research and in environmental, health, and other public science is being put in jeopardy.

This is not just the opinion of the Liberal Party. It is also the opinion of hundreds of scientists and engineers from around the world, who signed an open letter last fall urging the Prime Minister to end "...burdensome restrictions and barriers to scientific communication and collaboration faced by Canadian government scientists."

The Liberal Party understands that researchers are central to how policy is made, and that is why Liberals are standing firmly behind scientists and their research.

•(1150)

[Translation]

Decision-makers and Canadians generally count on the crucial expertise and research of federal scientists to protect the safety of their food, water, air and environment.

[English]

Freedom to communicate their findings will benefit the integrity of scientific research, will help the Canadian public and policy-makers to make informed decisions, and will help repair our nation's international reputation.

I remember being very angered and embarrassed in 2010 at Women Deliver, a large public health conference held in Washington, at what the government had done to our international reputation. At the conference, Susan Cohen, then director of government affairs at the Guttmacher Institute, a U.S. non-profit organization that promotes reproductive health, referred to Canada as an "evidence-free zone".

In the wake of the SARS crisis, the Naylor report made it clear that Canada needed a public health agency headed by a chief public health officer who could speak directly to Canadians. Buried in last year's omnibus bill is the demotion and muzzling of the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada. He has been stripped of his abilities to set priorities, to determine appropriate resources, and to speak directly to Canadians without political interference. He has been reduced to being an adviser to the minister on the things that the minister chooses to be advised upon, instead of actually speaking up for the public health of all Canadians whenever he sees fit.

The Conservative government's obsession with political control and suppression of science is damaging our reputation around the world and is truly appalling. This decision, and those like it, must be reversed in the interest of all Canadians.

One need look no further than the government's misguided decision to replace the long form census with the national household survey for proof of its ongoing war on evidence. The government spent \$22 million more on the 2011 national household survey than it would have on the long form census to collect data that was seriously compromised. As a result, it has essentially ended our ability to compare the data with earlier census statistics. We can no longer see trends over time.

*Business of Supply*

This means we are flying blind when it comes to a whole host of policy decisions. Chief statistician Munir Sheikh resigned from his post over this misguided decision and explained that a critical issue was the fact that StatsCan was subject to significant interference from the Conservative government. He has gone on to say "...in my mind the most serious consequence of canceling the census is the loss of trust in Statistics Canada to be independent of government interference."

The government's misguided approach to the long form census is unfortunately not the exception but the rule in terms of the government's ongoing approach to science and scientists. Ongoing cuts by the Conservatives to scientific research programs and continual muzzling of federal scientists represent clear attacks on evidence-based policy-making in an attempt to silence opposition to their ideologically based policies. I remember that very early on in this regime, the government side continued to refer to Liberal-funded social science research as though it was a swear word. We know that good social science research never proves what this government is intending to do, so it has to be silenced and de-funded.

The Conservative government understands that if problems are not measured, they are not noticed, and therefore the government does not have to act to fix them. The government is cynically and systematically undermining the public and not-for-profit sectors' ability to research areas it fears will prompt action on issues counter to its very narrow agenda.

Unfortunately, my allotted time does not permit me to provide an exhaustive review of all of the government's actions in support of this disturbing pattern, but here are a few highlights.

The world-renowned Experimental Lakes Area was de-funded by the federal government in budget 2012.

Since 2013, DFO scientists must now get departmental approval to submit research to scientific journals.

In 2013 the government shut down the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, formerly an arm's-length organization, and even prevented it from posting a final report.

In 2014, the government de-funded the Canadian Health Council. Also in 2014, the government closed seven out of nine Department of Fisheries and Oceans libraries. The library closures are nothing less than an erosion of Canada's collective memory.

As my Liberal colleague, the member for Kingston and the Islands, himself a scientist, so eloquently said of the library closures:

The Harper government may not like science...but it does not have the right to literally trash the products of decades worth of research just because it doesn't suit the ideology of the Harper Conservatives.

● (1155)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** For I think the third time this morning, I remind all hon. members that they cannot use the names of other members, including the Prime Minister, even when they are doing so in a quote.

The hon. member for St. Paul's.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, to continue, he stated:

Destroying data is not just an ideological problem, it's also blatant fiscal mismanagement.

Government decisions must be based on evidence and facts, and the health of our democracy depends on an informed public. Unfortunately, this is a government engaged in an ongoing and deliberate attack on science. The Conservatives cynically and systematically gut funding for programs that may produce results that are not in line with Conservative ideology.

However, this motion is more than a condemnation of the government's war on science and scientists. It sets out a road map for how to move us beyond an attitude toward science resembling the medieval Inquisition to a modern acceptance that scientific freedom is at the root of progress. As Nobel Prize-winning scientist Sydney Brenner said, science is the best tool available for man to solve human problems.

The motion calls on the government to immediately rescind all rules and regulations that muzzle government scientists, consolidate government-funded or government-created science so that it is easily available to the public at large, and allow scientists to be able to speak freely on their work with limited and publicly stated exceptions.

The motion also calls on the government to create a chief science officer whose mandate would include ensuring that government science is freely available to those who are paying for it, namely, the public.

This motion offers me the opportunity to reflect on the way forward and on what a government committed to evidence-based policy and the importance of research and science could achieve. We must return to the practice of transparent and public advice to ministers. We have an ideal model for the way it could and should work in Canada in the form of the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. COSEWIC was created in 1977 as a result of a decision made at the conference of federal-provincial-territorial wildlife directors held in 1976.

In 2003, the Species at Risk Act established COSEWIC as an advisory body to ensure that wildlife species would be assessed using the best available scientific and aboriginal traditional knowledge. Under SARA, the Species at Risk Act, the Government of Canada is mandated to take COSEWIC's designations into consideration when establishing the legal list of wildlife species at risk. More important, COSEWIC's evaluation process is independent and transparent, and the results are reported to CESCC and the public.

*Business of Supply*

The final decision rests in the hands of the minister, but the scientific recommendations are available to the public, and it is therefore up to the minister to explain to the public the reasons behind any decision not to follow the recommendations of those scientists exactly. There is no question that government decisions must be based on the full picture of science, economics, and common sense, but all of the information and context that go into that decision should be available to the public in a transparent way.

The science advisory board at Health Canada should be re-established, mandated not only to advise the minister on emerging issues of the day but also to strike the appropriate advisory panels. These panels must be free of bias and conflict and their advice seen as truly independent. They must be able to provide the best possible evidence-based policies, policies that Canadians will be able to trust.

There is a very important virtuous cycle of research, policy, and practice. It is imperative that governments understand that moving from research to policy requires informed knowledge translation that includes the public. To move from policy to practice means that governments have to have the political will to move the good evidence-based policy into practice in a timely fashion. Then it is very important that an evidence-based government would take that practice and move it back into better research questions by funding applied research in communities, in practice, to would allow us to ask better research questions, moving again to better policy and to better practice.

This virtuous cycle only moves properly when citizens are involved in the research and evidence that exist. It is only then that citizens can hold their government to account. It is only then that citizens can ask why this research is not in public policy, why this policy is not actually in practice, and whether that practice is being properly evaluated to ensure that governments are funding what works and are able to stop funding what does not work in this virtuous cycle.

● (1200)

With a truly informed public, that virtuous cycle moves rapidly, and that is what we are calling for today. We want the government to understand that by muzzling scientists, by not allowing researchers to speak to the public directly and their colleagues outside of government and around the world, it is depriving Canadians of the ability to truly hold their government to account. It is depriving parliamentarians of the ability to hold Parliament to account and to insist on policy that is evidence-based, not rooted and anchored in ideology.

Canadians deserve complete and open access to the information that is produced by scientists who are paid by them, the public. I urge all members to support this motion, and I thank my colleagues for having put this forward.

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for a passionately delivered speech in the House. She so often passionately engages in our debates and discussions.

However, I think that in this case passion may have overwhelmed her memory somewhat. From 1994 to 1997, the Liberal government of the day drastically cut government funding of science and technology. In contrast, since 2006, our government has quite

enthusiastically provided some \$13 billion in funding to science across Canada.

I wonder if the Liberal member can explain why, since 2006, she has consistently voted against our government's funding requests for science and technology.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member that the Liberal government had a terrific track record in the tough times, in 1994, 1995, and 1996, when Canadians were with the Liberal government on the decisions that had to be made to get Canada out of the economic basket case it had been left in by the previous Conservative government. They were tough decisions, but I think we did a good job of explaining to Canadians why they had to be made.

Today's issue is about the muzzling of scientists. Obviously we are upset by the funding cuts to these research entities, which we believe are absolutely necessary. However, the attitudinal problem of the government, not wanting the public to know what scientists are finding out and discovering so that Canadians can hold the government to account and insist on evidence-based policy, is why we are supporting this important motion today.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. This is certainly a very important motion. We are pleased that the Liberals intend to support the NDP's proposal to create the position of parliamentary chief science officer.

There is one thing I would like to know. During every election campaign, the Liberal Party promised to make science a priority, but then every time it tabled a budget, it made heavy-handed cuts to funding for science and research.

What does my colleague have to say about that?

● (1205)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question.

[*English*]

It is actually in the DNA of Liberals to want evidence-based policy.

[*Translation*]

We think it is essential to have evidence-based policies and for the Prime Minister's Office to demonstrate leadership. This is a very important issue right now, and I thank the member for her support.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the muzzling of scientists under the current administration has been unprecedented. I worked in the minister of the environment's office during the Mulrone administration, and Environment Canada scientists spoke freely. Sometimes the minister was disturbed by the forthright comments of scientists, but we knew we could not ask them not to talk to the media because it was an essential part of democracy that Environment Canada scientists be free to do that.

I want to point out to my colleague that the Conservatives may well have spent billions of dollars on science, as we heard from the member for Thornhill, but it is important to remember that money alone does not tell the story. The 2012 budget quite specifically said that research funds must be “business-led” and “industry-relevant”.

We have slashed the number of scientists who look after fisheries and the environment.

I would ask my colleague if she agrees.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her participation at the wonderful debate we had at the University of Toronto, with Chris Turner, and one of her colleagues with Scientists for the Right to Know.

It is hugely important that money on its own, with an attitudinally incorrect government, is not going to move the progress of this country forward.

I think all of us in the House very much enjoyed the presentation two weeks ago from the scientists at McGill about the importance of basic research, curiosity-driven research, going forward. Curtailing the funding of research is generally misguided and wrong.

**Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have the opportunity to ask a question to my hon. colleague.

It is interesting. There was unprecedented funding last year, including \$1.5 billion for world-leading discovery research by institutions right across the country. Can the member tell me where the bias is? It does not exist.

This year the government provided \$1.33 billion of infrastructure funding. We were told by the community that is what they needed to continue with the scientific agenda, for Canada to continue to be world-leading.

Canadians love consistency. Interestingly enough, the current communications policy with respect to scientists conducting media interviews is the same as it was in 2002 when the Liberals presented it.

Is the hon. member now going against the policy that her party put in place, which is basically the policy that our government has continued with?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, the member's question gives me the opportunity to explain that it depends under whose hands any policy is executed.

What is happening is that there are scientists with minds assigned to them from political offices to make sure they do not

speak to the media, as opposed to people trying to make sure there are opportunities for them to speak. It is a very different approach.

I would tell the member opposite that I have never seen the morale amongst the scientific community as low as it is right now. People are telling their children not to become a government scientist. This is dire situation. From the issue of health research, and all of the upsetting realities of what the government has done to the reputation of Canada around the world because they will not let scientists speak to the public and their colleagues, the member responsible for this should be ashamed.

● (1210)

**Hon. Ed Holder:** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member's response did not quite answer the question. However, I would like to move on from there.

In the spirit of consistency, it was her leader who spoke about the policy for innovation. He said, “A large part of it is transitioning away from manufacturing-based employment as a driver in the economy...”.

What the Liberal leader was really saying to 1.7 million Canadians is that they should find another job because they are not part of the Liberal vision of a knowledge economy.

Would the member opposite agree with her leader that we need to transition away from manufacturing-based employment?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, I will not even dignify that with a response. That was completely out of context from when the leader was at our caucus in London, in southwestern Ontario.

That member knows the devastation that has taken place in southwestern Ontario and how important the manufacturing sector has been, and how little support the government has given to manufacturing in this country.

It is a hugely important time now to get away from this partisan nonsense and actually support science. Let us get the research on productivity. Let us get the kinds of research that these companies need to go forward and compete in the world.

It is hugely ridiculous that we have to listen to that kind of stuff instead of solving the problem for all Canadians, particularly in southwestern Ontario.

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to participate in this important discussion. I will be splitting my time with the member for Oshawa.

This motion seems to claim that there is a grand conspiracy to constrain scientific researchers within the government from ever speaking publicly or to the media. It gives an impression that the important work of our government scientists is not shared in the public domain. You, Mr. Speaker, certainly members on this side of the House, and I believe on the other side as well, know that this is completely untrue. There are countless examples of publicly disclosed scientific publications and media interviews given by federal scientists every week, every month, every year.

*Business of Supply*

First let me review the context of the Government of Canada's communications policy. The communications policy of the Government of Canada is readily available from the Treasury Board Secretariat. All scientists working for the Government of Canada are public servants who are subject to that policy. All federal public servants are expected to work within the parameters of the communications policy of the Government of Canada.

The policy section on accountability begins by stating that “ministers are accountable to the Prime Minister and to Parliament for presenting and explaining government policies, priorities and decisions.... Ministers, both individually and collectively as members of Cabinet, are the principal spokespersons for the Government of Canada and its institutions”.

The policy elaborates on spokespersons. Ministers are the principal spokespersons; ministers present and explain government policies, priorities and decisions. Therefore, when it comes to policy and policy-making, ministers are the leads. They are the decision-makers for their departments and also the primary communicators of those decisions.

I would like to cite a paragraph from a very thoughtful contribution published in *The Globe and Mail* just last Friday, May 22. It was written by Michael Rennie, Canada Research Chair in Freshwater Ecology and Fisheries, who is also an assistant biology professor at Lakehead University, and a research fellow with the International Institute of Sustainable Development-Experimental Lakes Area. The co-author was Andrew Leach, associate professor at the Alberta School of Business at the University of Alberta. Both of these gentlemen have worked within the Government of Canada as well as in their various academic dimensions. They wrote:

Most, if not all, policy decisions of governments require weighing costs and benefits. Research from various sources, often including government scientists, is used to inform policy-makers of the likely consequences of proposed actions, but at the end of the day, research can't tell you what decision should be taken. Making these decisions is reserved for our elected representatives.

Public servant scientists, then, are to focus on their job of research to inform decisions that are then made at the political level by elected representatives. In turn, communication of that work must also occur in ways that are not advocating policy positions but informing the public about what considerations may be going into them. Therefore, employees of the public service are to focus their communications activities on issues and matters pertaining to the policies, programs, services, and initiatives that they administer on behalf of elected ministers.

Mr. Speaker, you also know full well that media is essential in helping to promote public awareness, an understanding of government policies, programs, and initiatives. Media inquiries, whether by phone or email, must be addressed promptly to accommodate public deadlines. Departments work hard to meet those demands. While doing so, departments also inform the primary spokesmen of the department, the minister and his or her office, when preparing these responses, as they may have broader policy implications.

• (1215)

The motion we are debating refers to elements of the public interest, like protection of the environment and the health of Canadians, so let us focus for a moment on Environment Canada.

It is a science-based organization with one of the largest science programs in government. Every day, staff at Environment Canada conduct a wide range of environmental monitoring, research and other scientific activities in fields like atmospheric sciences, meteorology, physics, biology, chemistry, hydrology, ecology, engineering and informatics. In fact, over half of the employees at Environment Canada work in science and technology occupations.

Science accounts for the majority of Environment Canada's budget and it provides critical information that contributes to the departmental mandate of ensuring a clean, safe and sustainable environment for Canada. Science, I think it is fair to say, is the foundation for Environment Canada's policies and actions. There are a great many examples of how this science benefits Canadians. Their reports and hundreds of others on a wide range of subjects are available on the publications web pages of Environment Canada's website and the publication pages of other federal departments as well.

As an example, the chemicals management plan, a joint initiative run by Environment Canada and Health Canada, uses the Canadian Environmental Protection Act of 1999, launched in 2006, the year of the election of our government. It is aimed at reducing the risks posed by chemicals to Canadians and their environment. There is a focus on a great number of substances, some 4,300 substances to be studied between now and 2020. Budget 2015, members will recall, set aside almost half a billion dollars to continue to assess and manage the risk to human health and the environment in the third five-year phase of that plan.

Another good example of information sharing is the joint Canada-Alberta implementation plan for oil sands monitoring. It is scientifically rigorous. It is a comprehensive, integrated and transparent environmental monitoring of the oil sands region. The program is world class. It has been recognized as a world-class system internationally, and designed to be one of the most comprehensive water monitoring systems in the world. The governments of Alberta and Canada committed to ensuring that the data from the monitoring activities and the scientific methods used are transparent, supported by necessary quality assurance and made publicly available.

I would recommend that any in this House, on both the government and the opposition side, as well as any viewers of today's debate, drop in to visit the website, the portal established by Environment Canada, [www.jointoilsandsmonitoring.ca](http://www.jointoilsandsmonitoring.ca) and see some of the science that is being shared quite openly and transparently therein.

Now let us examine Environment Canada's media interaction. Last year, Environment Canada received 5,800 requests for information for media. For those 5,800 or so media requests, Environment Canada provided about 4,200 interviews with subject matter experts and/or scientists. In these interviews they discussed weather requests and offered experts, including scientists, climatologists and ice forecasters. This, I think, very clearly demonstrates that Environmental Canada is responsive to media requests, including for interviews in the modern 24/7 media cycle environment, which is required from every government department.

In concluding, I think that these facts show that all of this is a far cry from the pessimistic scenario described in the motion we are debating. Let us instead continue to recognize, champion and celebrate the world-class work performed by so many Government of Canada scientists every day, and let us celebrate as more and more of that work is adapted to or transferred on to our open data portal.

I will be voting against the motion that is before the House today, and I would urge all of my fellow members to do the same.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to ask my colleague a question about the motion that is before us today. Certain things have come to light recently. A former federal scientist said that he felt muzzled when he worked for the Government of Canada. He said that he did not feel as though he had the right to share the results of his studies and investigations with the public. It was only after he retired that he felt free to talk about those results and to bring to light the alarming situation within the federal government.

What does my colleague have to say about the concerns raised by these scientists who worked for the Government of Canada? A survey showed that 90% of government scientists did not feel free to discuss the results of their research.

What does the member have to say about these concerns and these well-documented facts? What does he have to say to the former scientists who are making these claims?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know the specific case, but I think the content of the question revealed reasons that the public servant to whom he refers anonymously felt constrained from expressing his views of an alarming communication situation within the department. Well, that quite clearly has nothing to do with the work that he was employed to do as a public servant under the public service communications guidelines that I just mentioned in my speech. He obviously wished to speak, as the NDP motion, another motion before this House, would have government scientists or any public service employees speaking whenever they wish to on public policy issues, which quite clearly is not acceptable under the public service communications act.

• (1225)

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his comments today with respect to how much research is important to environmental policy making. I was glad to hear his comments on how well respected our scientists are in the research community.

### *Business of Supply*

Just a couple of weeks ago, I made an announcement on R and D infrastructure at a fish hatchery. The minister of state and I made an announcement at the University of New Brunswick on biofuels. In both those cases, both of the scientists were very open to speak to the media with respect to their research. This is research that will be internationally used because of biofuels and the inner and outer bay Atlantic salmon.

I would ask the member to inform the House and talk to us a little more about how the government has helped our scientists to achieve this international status.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the good news that he and the minister shared that and other policy announcements.

It is important for members across the House to realize that Canada is ranked number one among G7 countries for our government's support of scientific research and development in public institutions, in colleges and universities, and associated scientific study.

To my colleague's point there is, in the flawed supposition of the motion before this House today, a grand conspiracy to keep scientific information from Canadians, which in fact is simply not the truth. The statistics, reality and record simply do not support that supposition.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud of the world-class science produced by Environment Canada. Research produced by Environment Canada scientists informs our policy decisions, supports the delivery of environmental services, and helps enforce the laws and regulations that protect Canada's environment.

Environment Canada employs leading experts across a range of environmental science fields, such as water, wildlife and climate science. We deliver science that is of high impact, collaborative and, of course, transparent.

In support of keeping Canada clean, safe and sustainable, Canadians currently have access to a wide range of Environment Canada monitoring data through the open data portal established by this government. This includes scientific data, such as air quality indicators, greenhouse gas inventories, weather and climate data, as well as the national pollutant release inventory and the data gathered through the Canadian environment sustainability indicators program.

*Business of Supply*

Environment Canada scientists are also actively encouraged to publish the results of their research in peer-reviewed scientific journals. The department produces around 700 peer-reviewed publications per year, making it one of the most productive environmental research institutions in the entire world. The scientific impact of Environment Canada publications is well above world average. Its papers are cited 50% more than the world average. They are also published in journals that are more impactful than the world average.

Furthermore, I am proud that the work of three Environment Canada scientists was recognized by the Thomson Reuters 2014 report on The World's Most Influential Scientific Minds as being among the most highly cited scientific works in the world over the past decade. Environment Canada's science is highly visible, recognized and influential in the scientific community.

Environment Canada science is making a difference. Scientists play a key role in understanding our environment and the actions needed for it to remain clean, safe and sustainable for all Canadians. Publicly funded science is being put to use to serve Canadians, and I will highlight a few excellent examples. We continue to take action to keep Canadians and their environment safe from the risks of chemical substances. Canada is a world leader in this area. This government is taking a science-based approach and, as we announced in budget 2015, is investing \$491.8 million over five years, starting in 2016-17, to renew the chemicals management plan.

We work hard to protect Canadians from severe weather 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Science is central to providing accurate and timely severe weather forecasts and warnings. Environment Canada scientists and meteorologists develop and run complex weather models on one of Canada's fastest supercomputers. This helps protect Canadians across the country, allowing weather-sensitive businesses and operations, as well as Canadian families and communities, to prepare for and respond to emergencies. We are investing \$34 million over five years, starting in 2015-16, to renew meteorological and navigational warning services in the Arctic.

We rely upon the valuable and world-class science produced by federal scientists and their collaborators to protect Canada's diverse wildlife. Caribou are an iconic symbol of Canada's boreal forests. The Government of Canada issued a recovery strategy for the woodland caribou boreal population in 2012. The recovery strategy is based on science and of course traditional aboriginal knowledge. This government and our partners in provincial governments, aboriginal communities, industry stakeholders, academics and environmental non-governmental organizations all play a vital role in protecting this important species.

These are only a few examples that demonstrate the department's commitment to a clean, safe and sustainable Canada. Indeed, the department has invested record amounts of money, over \$5.3 billion for example, in science and technology since 2006.

• (1230)

Environment Canada scientists do not work alone on these issues. We join forces with key partners to address common environmental issues to make the most of the significant investment. Collaboration is a cornerstone of Environment Canada's science and is key to the high regard our science receives, both in Canada and abroad.

In 2013, for example, nearly 90% of Environment Canada's publications involved at least one author from outside the department.

Nationally, Environment Canada scientists collaborate with colleagues from academia and other federal departments and levels of government.

Internationally, we publish with scientists from more than 70 countries, including leading global institutions, such as the World Meteorological Organization and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

This high rate of collaboration significantly increases Environment Canada's internal science capacity and keeps the department at the leading edge of scientific inquiry.

Environment Canada demonstrates the principles of collaboration and transparency through its action on the open government initiatives

In 2013, our Prime Minister and the other G8 leaders adopted the G8 Open Data Charter, which established open data principles for all member countries and called for specific commitments to release core public sector data.

Our government has since released Canada's action plan on open government 2014-2016, including a new open science commitment. This particular commitment aims to enhance open access to publications and related data resulting from federally funded research, in order to accelerate research, drive innovation, and most important, benefit our economy.

Transparency and accountability are core values that this government has brought to bear on all of its activities, including publicly funded science.

Through the new open data portal, Environment Canada shares its scientific data and research with Canadians. For example, we recently posted a full list of the department's peer-reviewed scientific and technical publications produced in 2012. We monitor and share data on national greenhouse gas emissions, water quality, wildlife population health, and more.

Environment Canada scientists play an important role in informing and assisting ministers in their responsibilities to promote a clean, safe, and sustainable environment for all Canadians.

*Business of Supply*

In keeping with public service values, Environment Canada scientists do not comment publicly on government policy as this is the responsibility of ministers and their designated spokespersons.

Science has always been, and continues to be, the foundation of Environment Canada's work. Scientific and technical professionals represent over half the department's workforce. This workforce possesses the expertise necessary to continually produce cutting-edge science that underlies the department's policies, programs, and services.

I am proud that Environment Canada employs some of the best and brightest minds in the field of environmental science, who are actively producing and communicating research in support of Canada's environmental priorities.

Let us examine, now, Environment Canada's media interactions.

Last year, Environment Canada received close to 5,800 requests for information, from the media. For those 5,800 or so media requests, overall, Environment Canada gave about 4,200 interviews, with subject matter experts and scientists. The bulk of these were operational weather requests.

However, 369 Environment Canada interviews were given to the media in 2014 by other subject matter experts, including scientists, climatologists, and ice forecasters.

This demonstrates that Environment Canada is very responsive to media requests, including for interviews, in the modern 24-7 media cycle environment, which is required from every government department. This is a far cry from the pessimistic scenario described in the motion we are debating here today.

Let us, instead, continue to recognize, champion, and of course celebrate the world-class work performed by so many Government of Canada scientists each and every single day.

Of course, I will be voting against the motion, and I urge my fellow members to do the same.

•(1235)

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed to hear that the member is recommending voting against the motion.

The current government is bound by the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, in which it commits that we will not undermine environmental protections for economic advantage, which it regularly does and regularly violates that side agreement to NAFTA. What it also is not abiding by is the clean energy dialogue with the United States, whereby it undertakes that it will move forward in tandem with the United States in measures related to the clean energy environment. I am a little stunned that the member is saying they are not interested in following suit with the United States, which actually has an exact same position for science.

I wonder if the member would speak to why they are moving away from their co-operative relationship with our neighbour, the United States.

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, of course, I do not agree with the premise of that question. As I said in my speech, we are working internationally through our open government initiatives through the

G8, so it will establish open data principles for all member countries. The premise of the member's entire question is absolutely wrong.

We are making sure that Canadians have the full advantages of the research that is done through the Government of Canada, and the facts speak for themselves. The only parties here that do not want these scientific explanations to get out are the opposition parties. For example, on our Keystone pipelines, we all know that from an environmental standpoint this is the best way to transport these products. It is shameful that a member from that province would actually be against getting that science out.

The facts are quite simple. Canada is ranked number one in the G7 for our support for scientific research and development in our colleges, universities, and other research institutions. Our federal departments and agencies produce more than 4,000 science publications every single year. Natural Resources Canada scientists fielded more than 470 media interviews last year. Our scientists publish on average annually more than 500 peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals. We are very proud of our scientists on this side of the House, and the opposition parties should get on board with that.

**Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that the Liberals are putting this motion forward, because I have been in the House for two decades and I remember that, when the Liberals were in government, there were a number of articles accusing the Liberal government of muzzling scientists. I am sure my friend opposite will remember some of those articles, as they are easily found on Google. I urge people to look them up.

There always seems to be this debate about the freedom of government-employed, publicly funded scientists. My friend who just spoke pointed out that government scientists are encouraged to publish their findings and publish their research.

I am curious about exactly where this whole idea of muzzling comes from, because from what I heard my friend say, there is no muzzling at all. I would like to hear his comments on that.

•(1240)

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her excellent question and her service in the House. She is absolutely correct. If we look back historically, we see that the Liberal Party's record on this is dismal. The only reason for putting this motion forward, sadly, is to politicize the science and scientists who work for the Canadian government and the Canadian people.

The reality is that, since 2006, the government has invested more than \$5 billion into scientific research, which is a record amount for any Canadian government. The sad part about it is that the opposition actually voted against that. When we look at what opposition members state and at their actions, we see they are totally different.

In our ministry, for example, Environment Canada scientists are consistently recognized by world authorities for their expertise and excellence in the field of environmental research. Our meteorologists provide accurate forecasts and warnings for severe weather 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with the use of complex weather models.

*Business of Supply*

One thing everyone in the House should be proud of is that in a 2014 report by Thomson Reuters, which I mentioned in my speech, three Environment Canada scientists were listed as being among the world's most influential scientific minds. These are just some of the many examples that show how Environment Canada scientists are leading the pack and how we are investing in this very important research for the benefit of all Canadians, but also for people around the entire planet.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to start by reading the motion we are debating today. I want to give anyone who may not have been following this debate from the beginning an idea of the resolution members will be voting on this evening.

That, in the opinion of the House: (a) the government has constrained the ability of federal scientists to share their research and to collaborate with their peers; (b) federal scientists have been muzzled and prevented from speaking to the media about their work; (c) research is paid for by taxpayers and must be done in the public interest in order to protect the environment and the health and safety of Canadians; and, therefore, (d) the government should immediately rescind all rules and regulations that muzzle government scientists, consolidate government-funded or -created science so that it is easily available to the public at large through a central portal, create a Chief Science Officer whose mandate would include ensuring that government science is freely available to those who are paying for it, namely, the public, and allow scientists to be able to speak freely on their work with limited and publicly stated exceptions.

I have no difficulty believing that scientists who work for the Government of Canada should be free to talk about their research. They do not necessarily need to discuss the policies that the Government of Canada and Parliament must set, because that is up to Parliament and the government. However, the role of scientists is to share the information they glean from their research, because those are facts. The fact that the government has prohibited scientists from talking to journalists is very perplexing. It shows that the government does not trust them and does not want Canadians to know science, the truth and the facts. Is it because the government does not trust them? I think that might be one of the key factors in the Conservative government's decision to prevent scientists from talking to journalists.

I have another example. The government no longer allows public servants to talk to MPs. That is inconceivable to me, but that is how things stand.

I do not think it is right to prevent scientists from sharing the research they are paid to do with journalists and Canadians. That is a key part of the resolution before us, and it is certainly one of the reasons why I will support the motion.

I think this is the result of government decisions that are based more on ideology than on facts.

Let me give another example. We all remember one of the first decisions this government made when the Conservatives won a majority: it abolished the long form census. Nearly all Canadians opposed that decision. All universities and most of the provinces—eight out of 10 provinces—opposed that decision. The private sector opposed it. The municipalities were virtually unanimous in their opposition to it. Everyone opposed the notion of not having a mandatory long form census because it was a key source of information. It was replaced by a voluntary questionnaire.

Now we are in the very situation that everyone predicted: the statistics provided by Statistics Canada are no longer as useful as they once were. Who says so? It is the private sector, which has found that the information currently being provided by Statistics Canada is not as good.

● (1245)

There are decisions that the private sector, universities and municipalities need to make that are no longer based on solid information. That is a serious problem. In fact, we have promised that if we form the next government, we will bring back the mandatory long form census as soon as possible, as soon as we take office. We need to return to decision-making policies based on scientific fact, not on ideology.

There is another point I want to make.

[*English*]

I mentioned a while ago that it was not only scientists who were muzzled in not being allowed to speak with journalists, but all public servants had been, in a way, as well. I will give an example. They cannot speak to members of Parliament now.

A few years ago, I had a call from one of the local associations in the riding I represent, the Vanier Business Improvement Area, the Vanier BIA. It wanted some basic information on the grants in lieu of taxes program. As we all know, the Crown is not obliged to pay property taxes, but there are grants made in lieu of taxes. We created that program back in the 1990s.

I called the director general in Public Works and Government Services responsible for the program and left a message. I received a call back a few minutes later from the minister's office telling me that if I wanted to get information, I had to go through the minister. I said that was fine and asked to set up a briefing, which we did. I think it took three weeks. The gentleman I had called came with two of his associates, there were three people from the Vanier BIA, myself and two ministerial assistants from the minister's office. We had a half-hour exchange of information, all of it perfectly legitimate, nothing confidential, no information that could not be divulged.

At the end of the meeting, the gentleman I had called and left a message with, and who did not call me back because he was not allowed to, gave his business card to the people from the Vanier BIA and told them that if they needed more information, to please call him or send him an email. At that point, I asked if he was telling me that the person who was elected to represent them and help them could not call him and talk to him, and he confirmed that I could not. He had been instructed, as had all public servants, by the minister and the government to not to talk to MPs. I find that unconscionable.

*Business of Supply*

This means the government does not trust professional public servants to only divulge information they are allowed to by law. This has happened to me a number of times since, which I find unconscionable and absolutely unnecessary. We do have very professional public servants who do respect the law, who do not divulge information they are not allowed to. Yet they now have been told they cannot talk to MPs, just as scientists have been told they cannot talk to journalists. That is not the way to govern and we need to do away with such directions.

● (1250)

[*Translation*]

Another thing that concerns me greatly is the direction the government is taking with regard to research. It is focusing primarily on applied research and not on basic research. I am extremely concerned about that. We noticed in the past two budgets that the new guidelines for research groups specify that they are to associate with the private sector only. I think we are going in the wrong direction.

I have no problem with applied science applying, as it were, knowledge in the private sector in order to create wealth and employment. There is no real problem there. However, there has to be a balance. That is the problem. We are losing that balance. The National Research Council of Canada headquarters, located in the riding I have the privilege of representing, is leaning far too much, in my opinion, toward applied research instead of basic research. There is no doubt that applied research leads to gains. However, abandoning basic research is going to cost us dearly in the long term when it comes to quality of life, the economy, and so forth.

Here is an example.

[*English*]

A couple of years ago, I organized a debate with Dr. Arthur Carty. Before I get into that, let me explain who this gentleman is. He currently manages the Waterloo Institute for Nanotechnology at the University of Waterloo, but for 10 years he was the head of the National Research Council, from 1994 to 2004. He did a wonderful job there. He then was hired to be the first science adviser to the prime minister, and he did a great job there, too. When the Conservatives took over, they transferred him away from the position of prime minister's adviser and over to industry, and a year or so later, they cancelled that job. They did not do in a very elegant manner, unfortunately.

When I organized this debate a couple of years ago, Dr. Carty gave me some rather interesting statistics that should be of some preoccupation. For instance, what he calls the GERD/GDP ratio, or the gross expenditure on R and D over the GDP ratio, had dropped from the 16th position in the OECD in 2006 to the 23rd position in 2011. Let us compare the percentage of gross expenditure on R and D over the GDP in 2011. In Israel, it was 4.4%. In Finland, it was 3.8%. In South Korea, it was 3.7%. In Sweden, it was 3.4%. In Japan, it was 3.3%. In Denmark, it was 3.1%. In Canada, it was 1.7%. If we do not do better than that, we are headed for some serious trouble.

When we formed a government in the mid-1990s, Canada was experiencing a brain drain. We had some serious problems. After the

elimination of the \$39 billion deficit that we inherited from the Mulroney government, one of the first things we headed toward was improving our facilities in research. We created the Canada Foundation for Innovation, which members may recall. I think that we put in upwards of about \$10 million. We redid all of the labs in all of the hospitals and universities in our country. We gradually did other initiatives through the AUCC, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, creating scholarships, improving the NCERT, and changing and improving the medical research capacity in humanities research.

We eventually reversed the brain drain and we tremendously improved our standing in science and research. However, now we are heading the other way. That is a scary matter. To compound that, we are now telling our scientists that they cannot talk to journalists and share their information. I do not understand that.

● (1255)

[*Translation*]

Since coming to power, the Conservatives have closed 20 or so libraries in most departments, which is rather worrisome. It was disastrous at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, where they closed seven out of nine, if I am not mistaken. We were told that all the documents would be digitized or sent to Library and Archives Canada, but LAC did not take in a single one.

Evidence has been therefore destroyed and lost, reinforcing the fact that the government prefers to base its work on ideology rather than evidence.

[*English*]

This one is rather troubling. The Human Resources and Skills Development library included the largest collection of books in Canada on the social sciences. The libraries physical collections were entirely phased out in early 2013. The fate of these libraries is not unique, however. As I have mentioned, a number of them have been closed.

It is the same problems we have had in Health Canada. The Citizenship and Immigration library was closed in March 2012. We have seen the same thing throughout a number of departments. The National Capital Commission, the Transportation Safety Board, Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities, all have had their libraries closed, without necessarily saving the documentation that was in those libraries. Therefore, we are getting away from evidence-based decision making, again.

[*Translation*]

All that to say that the motion before us today is, in my opinion, very pertinent. I do not expect the Conservatives to adopt it. NDP members have moved other motions that the Conservative government has also rejected. The same thing will probably happen tonight.

*Business of Supply*

However, what people need to realize is that when there is a change in government, these conditions will be eliminated. Muzzling scientists and preventing them from speaking to journalists is unacceptable. They should have the right to share information, but not necessarily to discuss public policies. I agree that that is not their role. Taxpayers pay them to do research. The research belongs to the Canadian public. We have to reinforce that.

When I campaigned in 2008, I was floored after knocking on one door. A scientist answered the door, but I will not name him because he would get into trouble. He worked for the Government of Canada. He told me that he had just been told that he could not go to a conference and give the speech he was supposed to give because the government did not agree with the facts he was going to present. I am not talking about opinions, but about facts. When I met this person and he told me what the Conservative government had done to him, I became convinced that this had to change.

Unfortunately, this has not yet changed. I hope that it will one day because the scientific base in our society is very important. It is unacceptable that scientists who work for Canadians—and there are now thousands fewer than before—cannot share the information they have. This type of demagoguery is not healthy in a democracy.

We must therefore ensure that this type of behaviour does not occur and that these measures, which were imposed by the Conservatives, are abolished. I do not think they will be wise enough to do it themselves, so let us hope that, during the next election, Canadians make sure that they do not put the Conservatives back in charge and that Canadians are better served by their government, public servants and scientists.

I have never seen this sort of problem in all of my 20 years as an MP. We have always wanted a Parliament and a government that made decisions based on scientific facts, not on ideology. I think we need to change the direction we are now moving in. I hope that we will be able to do that, if not tonight, then in a few months.

• (1300)

[English]

**Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two quick questions.

First, what are the member's thoughts on having research findings peer reviewed before they are discussed in the public domain?

Second, the communications policy for scientists is the same policy that was in place when he was in cabinet in the early 2000s. Has the member had a change of heart on that policy and could he provide us with any thoughts on that now?

[Translation]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, I will answer my colleague's second question first.

What he said is not true. That was not the policy of the government I was part of. I was a member of cabinet, and at the time, our scientists were allowed to talk to journalists and share information. I am not talking about discussing public policy. That is a completely different story. I agree with my colleague that that is not the role of scientists. However, they had the right to talk to

journalists and to share factual information. I do not see any problem with them continuing to do so.

With regard to my colleague's first question, I am sorry but I do not remember it. If he would like to repeat the question, I will answer it.

**Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned the following in his speech. It is a huge problem that the Conservatives decided to eliminate the mandatory long form census in 2010. In an article published last week, scientists made a heartfelt plea, saying that they no longer have data and that the small amount of data they do have are biased and do not reflect reality. They can no longer conduct research.

Our former chief statistician even made a joke, saying, "Guess what? Canada managed to eliminate poverty. How did it do that? By simply eliminating the mandatory census."

The Conservatives are trying to eliminate the problem by preventing scientists from accessing data. Thus, the Conservatives will not have to be accountable to the public.

Could my colleague speak to this very serious problem?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, I already spoke about that.

The elimination of the mandatory long form census is probably one of the worst decisions this government has made. It skewed all of the data. Statistics Canada used to be a very strong agency. It has now become weaker. Munir Sheikh chose to resign because, at the time, the government was trying to make him say something he had not said, which is that he agreed that eliminating the mandatory long form census was a good idea. He decided to do what he had to do and would not go along with having words put in his mouth.

That is what is happening now. Scientists are no longer allowed to talk to journalists because the government wants to speak for them. We are lacking solid facts and information, and now that is what will be used to make decisions. Even the private sector is now completely against this decision. It needs to be reversed as soon as possible, certainly before the next census.

• (1305)

[English]

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Ottawa—Vanier for his honest assessment of the government's paranoia and tendency toward muzzling of anyone who disagrees with it.

I want to refresh our memories of the past seven years of this government, and I would like my friend to comment.

*Business of Supply*

We will remember the firing of chief superintendent, Marty Cheliak, director general of the Canadian firearms program; the Wheat Board chair, Adrian Measner, president and CEO; Linda Keen, from the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission; Richard Colvin, diplomat from Foreign Affairs; Peter Tinsley, the military police complaints commissioner; Yves Côté, the ombudsman for National Defence and the Canadian Forces; and the budget officer, Kevin Page, who left. The government decided to oppose and alienate anyone who disagreed with it. We will remember Kairos, an organization that promotes democracy around the world. Bev Oda ensured its funding was cut because it mentioned the word “environment”.

Is the member as much alarmed as I am, and most Canadians, about the government's tendency toward disenfranchising and cutting funding from anyone who disagrees with it?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Yes, I am alarmed, Mr. Speaker.

There is a new phenomenon in this city that I have not seen before. In the past, I found that when public servants retired, they were somewhat discreet and did not get actively involved in political parties. However, what I find today is rather surprising in that when they retire, they very rapidly join our party. They want to get rid of the Conservative government because of the way they have been treated, and it is not just the scientists but other public servants as well. I have mentioned this before.

In Bill C-4, the government totally put in shambles the laws governing the relationship with our public service. In the current bill before the House, Bill C-59, it is the same thing. The Conservatives would give the President of the Treasury Board total power to decide unilaterally, without negotiation, how to arrive at a sick leave program. It is not through negotiations anymore.

What has happened in the last few years is that our federal public service has been totally mistreated, and it is not prepared to accept that anymore, including the scientists.

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat the question asked by my colleague. The member forgot to respond to it. Does the member find it important that any scientific information produced by any particular scientist be peer reviewed before it is spoken about in the public realm?

Second, our government created the Science, Technology and Innovation Council, which created numerous voices on scientific matters. Does the member believe that more voices are preferred to a single voice, as the opposition is advocating?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, there have always been a number of scientific bodies giving advice to the government, but only once was there an adviser to the prime minister, and the Conservatives abolished the position.

Yes, we think we need an adviser to give advice to the Government of Canada. However, if the Conservatives believe for one second that person, whomever that may end up being, would do so unilaterally without consulting broadly, they are totally wrong.

In terms of peer review, absolutely. That is the nature of science. However, the Conservatives are now saying that because of peer-reviewed publications, scientists are free. Well, they are not, because

scientists before have been allowed to speak to reporters, journalists, but they are no longer allowed to do that.

To try to use the peer review as an excuse for imposing a muzzle on scientists is totally inadequate and unacceptable.

● (1310)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** We have time for a brief question and answer.

The hon. member for Pontiac.

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to what my colleague had to say, and I agree with him.

It is unfortunate that the government does not trust taxpayer-funded scientists. The truth is the truth, and people should be free to talk about it. It is also unfortunate that the government got rid of the long form census, which provided insight into many populations.

I would like to know my hon. colleague's reaction to the government's habit of making up its own facts and its own truths without listening to our public sector scientists.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, that goes back to what I was saying at the beginning of my speech: every government should make decisions based on facts, not ideology.

This is not a perfect world, and no government has been perfect. However, when I was in cabinet, we made much more of an effort to rely on facts and evidence than on ideology. This government gives us the impression that it is doing the opposite. Its decisions tend to be based more on ideology than on evidence, as demonstrated by the fact that it no longer allows scientists to talk to journalists.

Another example of that attitude is the elimination of the mandatory long form census, a choice that eroded the foundation for many decisions about municipalities, universities, businesses and provinces.

I get the sense that this government is relying more and more heavily on ideology than on facts.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to split my time with the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice.

I am very pleased to address this motion today, but before I get into that, I would just like to address some of the comments by the member for Ottawa—Vanier.

I want to make it clear that the President of the Treasury Board is working very hard in good faith with unions to find a way to address many of the concerns around sick leave, in particular in establishing a system that serves all of our public servants, particularly those who are new to public service. If the member opposite would like to see more information, other than just the talking points supplied to him by the Liberal Party, it might be helpful to him to understand what the government is attempting to do, which is in the public interest.

*Business of Supply*

In everything we do, our government is committed to ensuring that our activities stand up to the highest level of public scrutiny. This includes our communication efforts to inform citizens about the excellent work we all do to build a stronger Canada.

[*Translation*]

The government is committed to ensuring that these communications are well coordinated, managed effectively and tailored to the public's various information needs. I reject any allegation otherwise.

[*English*]

Our government clearly understands the importance of providing the public with timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information about its policies, programs, services and initiatives.

We also understand the need to use a variety of ways and means to communicate and provide information in multiple formats to accommodate diverse needs. In fact, all means of communication, from traditional methods to new technologies must be used to reach and communicate with Canadians wherever they may reside.

Any modern government requires the capacity to respond effectively over multiple channels in a 24-hour global communications environment. I am proud to say that we have been building this capacity in a number of areas. There are now over 1,200 Government of Canada social media accounts, such as Twitter and YouTube, and this number is growing weekly. Clearly, these tools have become indispensable in today's modern workplace.

●(1315)

[*Translation*]

Our government also recognizes the importance of providing quick, courteous and responsive service that considers the public's needs, addresses the public's concerns and respects the rights of individuals.

[*English*]

In addition, our government understands that it must ensure all institutions of the Government of Canada work collaboratively to achieve coherence and effective communications with the public.

It is useful to recognize the government includes dozens of organizations and thousands of employees spread across our great country and of course the world. That is why it is imperative we ensure coordination within, between and among federal institutions. Indeed, collaboration is, and must be, a top priority in this or any complex environment, otherwise we risk failing in one of our main duties of delivering information services in the best interests of Canadians and their government.

For the same reason, we also recognize the need to have well-developed processes and procedures for communicating with the public. It is worth underlining that in our system of government ministers are the principle spokespersons of the Government of Canada. This is because, under the Canadian parliamentary system that we all cherish, they are accountable to Parliament for presenting and explaining government policies, priorities and decisions to the public.

Let me repeat this last point one more time, because it is central to the issue we are debating today. It is the duty of every minister of the

Crown to present and explain government policies, priorities and decisions to the public, and they are supported in this role by senior management teams of government institutions, including deputy heads, heads of communications and other officials.

These individuals work closely together to ensure that the government speaks with a unified voice that is coherent and consistent across the government. I would add that all public servants understand that elected officials are accountable to Parliament and ultimately to the Canadian people and that a non-partisan public sector is essential to our democratic system. In fact, this understanding is a condition of employment for all public servants in the federal public sector and part of the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector.

Anyone who wants to find out more can consult the communications policy of the government. It includes all of the principles I have discussed today and many others, including requirements to reflect Canada's diversity, to communicate in plain language, and of course to communicate in Canada's official languages.

[*Translation*]

The policy states that:

In the Canadian system of parliamentary democracy and responsible government, the government has a duty to explain its policies and decisions, and to inform the public of its priorities for the country.

The policy also indicates that the public has a right to this information.

[*English*]

I can assure all hon. members in this place that our government takes this duty very seriously. We understand the importance of communicating to Canadians openly and transparently. We recognize that information is necessary for Canadians—individually or through representative groups or members of Parliament—to participate actively and meaningfully in the democratic process.

Before I close, I would like to provide a personal comment based on my own experience in this area. We are fortunate in my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla to have two federally funded research facilities: PARC, the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre in Summerland, British Columbia; and DRAO, the Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory near Okanagan Falls. Let me tell the House that these facilities do important work and they have made many strategic innovation-related partnerships that are important to our region and, I would also say, important to science in this country, and that research that is important for our world. I have attended both of these facilities, and I have to say that I have met many outstanding scientists in their respective fields.

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In my experience, the scientists I have met greatly enjoy the work they do and are always happy to host elected officials so they can learn more about the work the scientists do. It has never been suggested to me by any scientists I have met that they are in any way, shape, or form muzzled or feel that somehow the government is at war with them. In reality, it is actually the complete opposite, and that is why I will be opposing this motion. It is filled with the usual anti-government narrative popular among those who oppose our government. However, it does not reflect the reality of what I have experienced from the scientists I have met in my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla. In fact, one DRAO scientist even writes a popular column in a local newspaper. They are hardly muzzled.

Every organization has communication structures and related processes. If the Liberals truly believe science is better served by abandoning an orderly process in favour of a free-for-all approach, so be it. On this side of the House, we respectfully disagree.

• (1320)

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech with interest. Earlier today, I asked the Minister of State for Science and Technology about cuts to the federal science rolls. I noted that in 2011 we had just over 39,000 scientists employed by the federal government; now we are down to 35,000.

The minister sidestepped the question. I wonder if his colleague could explain why 4,000 scientists and researchers have been fired from the federal government rolls, and if he thinks this is a mistake.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to address my fellow British Columbian, and I appreciate his interest in this file. Certainly I do not speak for the minister, but I will speak to my experience in Okanagan—Coquihalla.

When there were some suggestions made by some people that we were making massive cuts to the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre, I made a point of inquiring to find out what they were talking about. In fact, they were talking about letting go one administrative position simply because that person was the assistant for a scientist who had retired over a year earlier; the role has not been replaced, so to keep someone on the payroll for that extended amount of time did not make sense.

Unfortunately, the same kind of voices speaking out, saying the government is cutting this or cutting that and is destroying science, seem to overwhelm the opposition. When we actually look at what the government proposes, it is oftentimes in the back office, oftentimes for redundancies, and we want to make sure that our scientists are supported.

Every time I have brought members of Parliament to PARC, they have always been richly rewarded by the experience, by the talent of our scientists. They appreciate the resources they are given, because at the end of the day places like the Okanagan rely so much on agriculture, and with some of the cutting-edge research that we rely on—whether it be on grape growing, viticulture, agriculture, tree fruits—those discoveries save jobs in the future. They make us more efficient and they make us more productive and competitive in this world economy.

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just heard there is a concern about public servants being partisan. What we are talking about here are scientists who are a subsection of the public service, but nonetheless research is not ideological. Scientists work with facts, and those facts are peer-reviewed and tested against other facts. It is not about opinions or ideas; it is about scientific fact and research.

The motion calls on the House to unmuzzle that practice, to respect intellectual freedom, but also to respect academic freedom and to allow scientists to present their facts in an objective way.

What evidence do the government members have that the scientists in the employ of the government are not pursuing true scientific testing? What facts do they have to support this notion that the science may be partisan and therefore should be filtered by a minister? What facts do they have that Canadian scientists in the employ of the government are not in fact objective? Do they have any facts, or is it just anecdotal evidence they are presenting to us?

• (1325)

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's concern. This is a good forum for debate on this, but I remind the member that ultimately we all can relate to what actually is happening on the ground. I have brought elected officials; in fact I have invited all members of the House to come and visit the facilities I mentioned earlier. Some have, and I am very happy to take them there. They will find that we have extremely talented scientists doing extremely rewarding work and getting their work out to everyone.

One little note is that I find it absolutely curious that it is the same Liberal Party that, when it says it will hold open nominations for elections and it turns out to be not true, is the first one to put out a spokesperson from the Liberal Party who will speak in one unified voice to address concerns by people who do not feel that they are open nominations. It is interesting that the Liberal Party utilizes this process for its gains and yet no other organization is allowed to use that kind of thinking. It is curious to me.

**Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to address the motion put forward by the hon. member opposite about government science and government scientists speaking publicly about their work. Allow me to offer a few points that are relevant to the issue.

One of the concerns suggested in the motion is that government scientists are not allowed to speak publicly about their work for the federal government.

[*Translation*]

Let me be clear. We understand and support the desire for government scientists to share their work and speak publicly about the work they do for the Government of Canada. Government scientists can do this. However, they must do so within the framework of policies and procedures that govern communications within the Government of Canada.

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[English]

The Government of Canada, as we know, is large and complex as an organization. There are almost 260,000 employees in the core federal public service spread across many different departments, and like many large organizations, the federal government needs to ensure its messages are consistent and coordinated. In fact, there are best practices in large organizations, both private and in the public sector, to ensure this happens, and the Government of Canada is certainly no different.

The framework of rules in the federal government includes a number of guidelines.

[Translation]

For example, the Government of Canada is guided by the communications policy of the Government of Canada. This is a Treasury Board policy that applies to many government departments. In a nutshell, it sets out the protocol that departments have in place to ensure it communicates effectively.

[English]

In their roles as principal spokespersons for their departments, the ministers are supported by their aides. These, of course, can be executive assistants, communications directors, and press secretaries in the ministers' offices. Ministers can also be supported in their roles by the senior management teams of government institutions. These include deputy heads, heads of communications, and other officials. Within the institution itself, officials can also be designated to speak on behalf of ministers, and those include technical and, of course, subject matter experts. There is a protocol in place to ensure that the information being shared or communicated to the public by those designated to speak on behalf of the government is consistent and coordinated.

[Translation]

The communications policy of the Government of Canada provides other safeguards as well. Departmental spokespersons, at all times, must respect privacy rights, security needs, matters before the courts, government policy, cabinet confidences and ministerial responsibility.

In addition, they must also confine their remarks to matters of fact concerning the policies, programs, services or initiatives of their institution. So while the communications policy of the Government of Canada allows for designated spokespersons to speak to the media, it requires they follow the rules in doing so.

• (1330)

[English]

In fact, there is a whole raft of good reasons why those speaking to the media or sharing information or commenting on the affairs of government are required to follow our best practices. Canada is one of the world's leading democracies, and the ability of government scientists to talk to others and to the public about their work is one of the hallmarks of our democracy.

It is a feature of our democracy that protects both the interests and the rights of the employer, as well as the Canadian public it represents. It is just common sense to have a balanced approach like

this. When individuals are employees of an organization, they are usually bound not to share details of their employer's business without permission, whether they work for Apple, Google, or the Government of Canada.

[Translation]

And as we all know, confidentiality is also the basis of professional integrity in fields such as law, medicine, accounting and journalism. The point is that being an employee brings with it a responsibility to those who employ you to follow the protocols that govern communications to protect the interests of all.

Another government guideline that speaks to this issue is the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector.

[English]

This code outlines the values and expected behaviours that guide public servants in all activities related to their professional duties and is a condition of employment for all public servants in the federal public sector. There is also a policy on conflict of interest and post-employment, which is also a condition of employment in the public service. It guides public servants to contribute to good government, democracy, and Canadian society through the loyal, impartial, and non-partisan support they provide to the elected government.

As dedicated professionals, they serve the public interest and uphold the public trust. Public servants must recognize that elected officials are accountable to Parliament and, ultimately, to the Canadian people and that a non-partisan public sector is essential to our democratic system. Therefore, communications by public service employees must take place within certain prescribed limits to ensure their impartiality. There is also the public interest to be protected, and our framework of policies has been created over the years to do exactly that.

All of us who are employees of the public institutions in this country have a responsibility to safeguard the interests of the Government of Canada. That is our job. It is our duty to do so. That includes, of course, ensuring information about programs and services is communicated to the public and is communicated responsibly.

[Translation]

Our policies on government communications are also in line with the government's move to open government in general. Open government is, among other things, about improving transparency and accountability in public institutions. It is a way to strengthen our democratic institutions, our economy and society in the digital world.

[English]

Canada, among the world's nations, is a leader in bringing open government principles to fruition in this country. It is something we believe in very strongly and wholeheartedly, whether we are sharing government data, disclosing information on government expenses or sharing information with the public. Open government and open communications go hand in hand. We will protect, we will promote and we will practise these principles in an intelligent and balanced way. That, of course, applies to government scientists sharing their information and communications with the public as well.

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I would ask our hon. friends to join us in promoting responsible open communications within the Government of Canada.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we listen to the government as it responds to a very proactive, progressive motion that is before the House recognizing the valuable contributions that scientists make to our society, we would think that it has its collective head in the sand. The Conservatives do not quite understand. Canada is losing scientists because of their attitude. There are scientists who are not able to share their work, their results, their studies and so forth, because the current government has put a gag order on our scientists.

My question for the member is, does he not recognize that scientists have the great potential if they were allowed to contribute to the debate and do simple things, such as having an interview with a member of the media in certain situations where the results that they want to provide would be very informative and assist in Canada moving in the right direction on good policy based upon science? Would he not acknowledge that is important for Canadian policy makers?

• (1335)

**Mr. Robert Goguen:** Mr. Speaker, as we sit here in the national capital, not in fantasyland, where the most talented scientists in the world work here in Ottawa in great numbers, we work with them in determining facts. Science is, of course, all about facts. Here are some interesting facts.

Fact: the Canadian federal government agencies have produced over 4,000 science publications per year.

Fact: public health agencies of Canada filled out over 3,000 media enquiries last year.

Fact: Natural Resources Canada scientists filled out over 470 media interviews last year and our scientists published, on average, 500 peer-reviewed articles in science.

We love the facts. We like sharing them with the public and the rest of the world so they can see how great Canada's scientists are.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is said that pride goeth before a fall. I wonder, with governments near the 9-10 year mark, whether or not they just become blind to the realities and are unable to hear what is actually being said.

In this debate today, we have, I think, a very well-inspired motion which talks about the reality, that scientists who work for the federal government in this country have almost uniformly complained they feel muzzled by the current government's policy. I have not heard any scientists come forward who say that they are proud of the government's policies of openness and transparency and sharing information. Quite the contrary. Scientists are coming out and complaining that the current government is muzzling them.

All I hear back from the government are statistics on how much money it is putting into funding science or what high quality science we have in this country, both of which may be true, but that is not the issue before the House. The issue before the House is whether or not the civil service and the scientists who work for the government are being unduly constrained in their ability to talk to the media, or opposition or civil society about the work they do.

I am asking the member to address his comments to that issue, which is the substance of this motion.

Does he or does he not agree that Canadian scientists are expressing publicly that they feel the current policy is unduly muzzling them, yes or no?

**Mr. Robert Goguen:** Mr. Speaker, if the hallmark is that there be 100% possibility of every interview asked for being granted by a scientist, then it must be muzzling.

What I know in the instance of fisheries, with respect to interviews requested of those working on the science base, is that last year 91% of the interviews requested were commented upon by scientists working for the Department of Fisheries.

No, it is not 100%. There is a consistency of communication, there is a timeline to follow, and of course we have to protect some of our scientific developments for the betterment of Canada and Canadian society.

If they are so muzzled how is it, then, that in a 2014 report by Thomson Reuters, three environmental Canadian scientists were listed as being among the world's most influential scientific minds? There must be something they are saying out there that is observed by the rest of the world for them to have such great accolades.

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood.

Let me start by summarizing very simply what our motion is today: one, we must stop muzzling our federal scientists; two, with few exceptions, we must make publicly funded government research readily available to the public, after all, they pay for it; and, three, we must create the position of chief science officer to ensure that the results of publicly funded research are made available to Canadians through some kind of central portal.

I have to say today that there is an element of the absurd in the very fact that we should have to present this motion to the Parliament of Canada. Who would have thought that in a country like Canada, muzzling scientists would be an issue?

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

Today, we are talking about science. For those who like definitions, the *Canadian Oxford* defines science as:

1. The intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment.
2. Systematic and formulated knowledge, esp. of a specified type or on a specified subject.

I dare say that I know enough about science to know what it is. I conducted research during my career. As president of the Canadian Space Agency, I was in charge of federal scientists and their research.

First and foremost, science is neutral. It is simply looking for answers. The results of good scientific research are just that: results. It is up to us to characterize those results as good or bad. Science naturally leads to discovery. That discovery informs us and sometimes allows us to find solutions to our problems. For instance, it can help us find a life-saving drug.

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However, science plays another role and that is to inform us. Sometimes science gives us good news and sometimes it gives us bad news. If the news is bad, then we have to do something about it.

[English]

For example, we may learn that certain fish stocks are at risk of being completely depleted and that we must impose a moratorium on fishing certain species, or that smoking causes cancer and that we need to educate the public on the hazards of smoking, or that global warming is occurring due to the increase in the human production of greenhouse gases.

All of this comes out of scientific research. The examples I have given you are examples of bad news. However, I believe we would all agree that it is just as important to hear the bad news as it is the good news. That is why scientific research is so important. That is why scientific results must absolutely guide our deliberations as lawmakers, and why we must legislate based on the best possible scientific evidence available to us. We owe that to Canadians. That is not what is happening with the current government.

[Translation]

This government denied global warming for a long time and some Conservatives still deny it, although they do not dare to say so publicly. Some have called it a “social conspiracy”. Those very words escaped the lips of the Prime Minister. Apparently, this conspiracy is driven by a Canadian anti-oil cabal.

We certainly know that federal scientists at Environment Canada cannot discuss or publish their research without the minister's consent. It is also quite clear to us that the government did not react to the scientific results that clearly indicate that we must take action to deal with greenhouse gases.

If my colleagues do not believe that Canadian scientists are being muzzled, then they should consult the most prestigious scientific journal in the world, *Nature*. They will find two editorials that openly criticize the Canadian government for muzzling our federal scientists.

As we all know, this government got rid of the mandatory long form census. We are all well aware of the results. I was at the committee hearings when the government decided to eliminate this form. Hundreds of groups told us the same thing: it made no sense to get rid of the most important database used to formulate our social policies in Canada.

As members know, the response rate, which used to be 93%, has fallen to 68%. The 32% who do not fill out the form are the people we should be following because they are the ones most in need of social measures.

• (1345)

[English]

This is the government that stopped funding the Experimental Lakes Area. This was an internationally recognized scientific laboratory that allowed Canada initially to study the effects of acid rain and later on to look at such things as the effect of phosphates flowing into our water systems, these kinds of things. Everybody agreed that this was very important for Canada. However, the government did not share that feeling and decided it would stop

financing it. Fortunately the Government of Ontario was able to use its funding, demonstrated the necessary understanding of the importance of the Experimental Lakes Area and we still have it today.

This is the government that got rid of the national science advisor. The previous Prime Minister of this country, Mr. Martin had put in place a scientific advisor to advise Canadians and in particular to have the Prime Minister's ear about the importance of science in this country. Obviously the current Prime Minister did not share that opinion, and first of all demoted him to report to the Minister of Industry. Then the Minister of Industry got rid of him.

This is the government that initially decided to stop funding Arctic research on ozone depletion, something that very much affects Canadians living in the far north of this country.

This is the government that refuses to recognize that scientific research related to crime and detention is important. This is a government that prefers to just lock up everyone and throw away the key.

This is a government that does not recognize the importance of social sciences and the value that they bring to us in terms of formulating policy in the government.

This is a government that devalues the importance of basic or fundamental research. This government focuses on applied research whenever it sees a commercial return, but it does not feel that basic or fundamental research is important.

This is a short-sighted view of the importance of science. This is playing God with the decisions about what science is important. It has proven time and again to be wrong.

[Translation]

In conclusion, science is an extremely important tool that guides us in our decision-making as legislators. We must share research results, whether they are good or bad. We must take action especially when the results are bad. We must definitely allow our scientists to speak freely about their research and publish it. They should not have to ask for permission to do so, except in some very exceptional cases. Finally, federal research should be shared with as many Canadians as possible. After all, they are the ones paying for it. To that end, we propose to create the position of chief science officer to ensure that government science is available to all Canadians through a central portal.

I hope that the government listened carefully to us today and that it will accept this motion, which is very important not just to the future of the country and our scientists, but also to policy-making.

[English]

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' 2002 communications policy says the following about policy advisors, program managers, and other functional specialists, including researchers:

Their supervisors must ensure that the head of communications, or his or her designate, is consulted on all activities and initiatives involving communication with the public or which have implications for an institution's internal communications.

Further, it states that “Ministers are the principal spokespersons of the Government of Canada”.

Does the member agree with the policy put forth by the Liberals?

• (1350)

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about apples and oranges here. I can tell the member that as president of the Canadian Space Agency, I would never have dared to question the scientific results and publications that my scientists wanted to put forward. They had the intellectual freedom to do so.

That does not mean that we do not check to make sure there is not proprietary information, privacy information, that there are not certain security implications. We would not have a problem with that.

However, when somebody wants to publish research that may be critical of the government, which has definitely been the case with the Conservative government, it is going against what should be allowed in this country, which is the freedom to publish scientific research for better or for worse.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question relates to the subclause and reference to creating a chief science officer. I wonder if my colleague could let us know whether this is intended to be the same as the parliamentary science officer that my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas proposed in Bill C-558.

Is there a distinction between the chief science officer and the parliamentary science officer? Is it the intention that the chief science officer would be within government, or would that position be an officer of parliament?

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer the question directly, in the sense that we have not fleshed out a definition or mandate for this chief scientific officer other than the principal mandate we describe in the motion. That is to make sure that federally funded scientific research would be effectively and efficiently made available to Canadians through a central portal so that they have access to it.

Whether or not we add other duties, and whether those duties are similar to the ones presented by the member's colleague from the NDP or they go in the direction of the national science advisor, which we created back in 2004 under the previous prime minister, is subject to discussion. Certainly it is something that could possibly be done.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question regarding the government's attitude, and particularly the Prime Minister's attitude, toward organizations with staff who have been fired, forced out, and publicly maligned, and those who have resigned in protest.

To give a list, there is the Canadian firearms program director general, Marty Cheliak; Adrian Measner from the Canadian Wheat Board; Linda Keen from the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission; Richard Colvin from foreign affairs; Peter Tinsley, who was the head of the Military Police Complaints Commission; Yves Côté, who was the ombudsman for the Department of National Defence

### *Business of Supply*

and the Canadian Armed Forces; former parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page; and Paul Kennedy, who was the chair of the commission for public complaints regarding the RCMP.

We all know that the member is a scientist himself and Canada's first astronaut. There is a sense with the Government of Canada that one is either onside and does not talk about science in Canada, or one is quiet and muzzled and not allowed to share concerns with members of the media or Canadians as a whole.

Could the member provide some comment on that?

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Mr. Speaker, I remember when I was a young parliamentarian—yes, I was young at one time—about six and a half years ago, that Linda Keen, who was the nuclear safety commissioner, was chased out of her job because she dared to make certain recommendations as part of her mandate which the government did not agree with.

He certainly outlined a very long list of people who were basically chased out of office during the past six or seven years. It is almost a routine occurrence. It speaks volumes about the government. There is the example of science which may be critical of the government. In the case of the environment, because the government is not doing its job, when it does not like the news that those who speak to power are giving, it chases them out. It demonizes them. It gets rid of them. Unfortunately, that is what is going to happen and has happened with some of our scientists.

• (1355)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Before we get to resuming debate and the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood, I will let him know that there are about four minutes remaining in the time before we have to start statements by members. We will get started just the same, and I will have to interrupt him part way through. However, he will have the remaining time when the House next resumes debate, presumably later this day.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I doubt that if you sought it you would have unanimous consent to make me go for the 10 minutes.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. John McKay:** I have some consent here, but there does not seem to be much consent elsewhere.

There are some resplendent ironies in discussing this motion on a day where *The Globe and Mail* carried the obituary of Dr. David Sackett. He is known as the father of evidence-based medicine at McMaster University. He was Canada's guru on evidence-based medicine.

If one does not function on evidence-based medicine, one sometimes does exactly the opposite of what one needs to do. The classic example in the medical field is the death of George Washington. The death of George Washington, a relatively healthy man, happened in the course of about 16 to 24 hours. In the course of those hours, he was attended upon by the best physicians that country had to offer, all of whom made their decisions based on practice, what they had done in the past. They were not based on evidence but on what they had done in the past.

*Statements by Members*

One of the practices was bloodletting. Over the course of 16 hours, they drained five pints of blood from the first president of the United States. If he was not sick before, he certainly would have been sick afterwards. He died. This was a practice that was not based on evidence. If we continue to make practices and decisions based upon something other than evidence, for example, ideology, we will actually kill the patient, as in the case of medicine.

That is my view of what is happening here. We have instances where environmental scientists are told to toe the line. Therefore, just as we have one department, one website, we should have one department and one voice. That was the edict that was published by the Department of the Environment in 2007, so that all inquiries of scientists would be funnelled through the political department of the minister at that time.

Environment Canada scientists, many of them world leaders in their fields, have long been encouraged to discuss their work with the media and the public, on everything from migratory birds to melting Arctic ice. Several of them were co-authors of the United Nations report on climate change that won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

Until now, Environment Canada has been one of the most open and accessible departments. As a consequence, because decisions are not shared widely, because there is not an opportunity for the scientists to discuss them, the decisions made at Environment Canada, and elsewhere in the government, are not optimum. After question period, I would like to give some classic examples of these decisions.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood will have six minutes remaining for his comments when the House next returns to the debate on the question, and of course the usual five minutes for questions and comments.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

### INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the National Assembly of Quebec adopted a unanimous motion refusing to accept any further federal interference in areas under municipal jurisdiction, which is what the NDP has committed to doing.

Whether we are talking about a department or a minister of municipal or urban affairs, it is the same thing. It all falls under Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction.

In the 1970s, the Liberals created a similar department of urban affairs. Quebec and the other provinces fought tooth and nail to defend their exclusive jurisdiction in that area, and the department was dismantled a few years later.

Quebec has always strongly defended its areas of jurisdiction. It will not let the federal government infringe on its jurisdiction, regardless of which party is in power.

The NDP wants to interfere and bypass the Parliament of Quebec in order to implement a pan-Canadian strategy in areas under Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction and centralize everything in Ottawa.

Working for Quebec means accepting the fact that Quebec is a nation.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### DIABETES DAY ON THE HILL

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is Diabetes Day on the Hill. I have type 2 diabetes. Representatives from the Canadian Diabetes Association are on the Hill meeting with various members of Parliament to bring awareness and to discuss how diabetes affects their lives and families.

Here are a few statistics. There are 3.4 million Canadians who have diabetes and 5.7 million Canadians who are pre-diabetic. The estimated cost of diabetes in Canada is \$14 billion. I am proud to say that our government has invested approximately \$334 million toward diabetes research. We also support the prevention of diabetes by investing close to \$20 million a year in partnerships that promote healthy living and prevent chronic diseases like diabetes.

Please join us at 4:00 in room 216N for the Sir Frederick Banting presentation. He was a great Canadian who discovered insulin. I invite all members to sign the Diabetes Charter of Canada to support Canadians in achieving their full health potential.

\* \* \*

### EMPLOYMENT

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, summer is coming and too many people across Canada, especially our young people, are looking for jobs and not finding them.

I fought for the youth in my community and was able to get additional funding for the Canada summer jobs program in Scarborough—Rouge River. Though this is a small victory for our young people, we need to do more for all who are suffering from the low level of good jobs in Scarborough. Our community has been robbed by cuts in the manufacturing industry, cuts that have replaced secure, good jobs with jobs that are temporary, part-time, and low-paying. Next weekend I am hosting a discussion and job fair with local stakeholders and employers who are creating job opportunities in the Scarborough community.

The current Conservative government has made empty promises about support programs and job creation, promises that have not delivered in our communities. Instead the promises reflect an irresponsible system, incompetence, and failure in addressing the important issue of unemployment.

Canadians deserve a government that delivers on promises, makes the economy work for all, and works hard for the well-being of youth. We need good jobs in Scarborough. We need a government that will create good jobs in all of our communities. That government will be the New Democratic government to be formed later this year in October.

*Statements by Members***DEMOCRACY IN POLAND**

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate the Republic of Poland on the recent presidential election. This month's election proves how far Poland has progressed since democracy was restored almost 26 years ago.

This election recalls Poland's strong democratic tradition, which dates back to 1793, when Poland became the first European country to adopt a written constitution.

I would like to congratulate president-elect Andrzej Duda on his electoral victory, and I wish him a successful term as president. I would also like to congratulate outgoing president Bronislaw Komorowski on his successful term as president and for his graciousness in defeat, and I congratulate the people of Poland for exercising their democratic franchise.

Poland is a great historical ally of Canada, and I am proud that our troops are serving side by side today on Operation Reassurance.

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**WORLD WAR II VETERAN**

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Miles Matheson, a lifetime servant of his community, province, and country.

Born in 1927 in Forest Hill, Prince Edward Island, Mr. Matheson served his country overseas, taking part in the liberation of France, Belgium, and Holland. He was awarded many medals and honours for his service, including the France and Germany Star, the Defence Medal for Britain, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and clasp, the War Medal, and, more recently, the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Mr. Matheson was recently awarded the highest honour of the country of France, the rank of Knight of the National Order of the Legion of Honour, for his role in liberating that country.

On behalf of all members of the House of Commons, I offer Miles Matheson our thanks for his many years of service to this great country and I congratulate him on such a distinguished honour.

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● (1405)

**TABLE FOR 1201 DINNER**

**Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this weekend I had the distinct pleasure of attending Table for 1201, the second edition of the pop-up dinner that took place at another exquisite setting in our city, beautiful Winnipeg.

This spectacular event, organized by Storefront Manitoba with the help of Deer and Almond and Diversity Food Services, was again a great success and brought people together in the spirit of design.

It was a fabulous opportunity to come together and enjoy great food and friends with 1201 guests gathered to share a meal. We enjoyed a beautiful summer night and spent an evening focusing on the great design culture that is growing in Winnipeg.

Each table's captain played an amazing part in the creative presentation. I thank them for their hard work and I congratulate the competition winners.

Congratulations to all involved and to all who attended an incredible event. I am already looking forward to next year.

\* \* \*

**DIABETES DAY ON THE HILL**

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, diabetes is an insidious disease. Like cancer, it can eat away at our bodies, but unlike cancer, diabetes is preventable.

The incidences of obesity, inactivity, and unhealthy eating habits are at an all-time high in our communities. We have sacrificed the future health of our children for the sake of convenience and we have clouded the adverse effects of additives, such as salt and sugar, despite the detrimental effects they have on our health.

[Translation]

Today, on Parliament Hill, we are fortunate to welcome representatives from several organizations dedicated to promoting awareness of diabetes. I invite all of my colleagues to take the time to learn about the extraordinary work being done to fight this disease and, especially, to support this work in the future.

[English]

We are nothing without our health.

[Translation]

A cure for diabetes is possible, with the right resources and the right attitude.

\* \* \*

[English]

**ACTS OF KINDNESS IN LANGLEY**

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Acts of Kindness is a Langley community-based tradition that was started by the Aldergrove Seventh-day Adventist Church 12 years ago.

Acts of Kindness has been doing extreme home repairs to Aldergrove homes of families in need. The renovations are worth up to \$100,000 each. The extreme home repairs are performed by volunteers over the two weeks before the Victoria Day holiday. Then the families are brought home for the big reveal.

The homes selected this year were for the Canessa family and the Shufflebotham family. Water leaks through the stucco exterior of the Canessas' home had caused mould problems inside. This repair also included new paintwork inside and out, electrical upgrades, and a new gas fireplace.

The Shufflebothams' home needed wheelchair access to the entire home, so the repairs included raising a sunken living room. The bedrooms were remodelled, and the home was painted inside and out. Other repairs included electrical upgrades and a new gas fireplace.

*Statements by Members*

Thanks to Aldergrove Seventh-day Adventist Church and all of the wonderful volunteers for their incredible acts of kindness to those in need.

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**TAIWAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN B.C.**

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to welcome to Ottawa 10 members of the Taiwan Chamber of Commerce in British Columbia. They are in Ottawa to meet with ministers, MPs, and government officials.

The chamber has a membership of over 650 Taiwanese-Canadian business people in B.C.'s Lower Mainland who share an interest in international trade.

These chamber members are exporting Canadian goods and services across the Pacific region and around the world. They represent great companies, including Advance Lighting Technologies, GS Travel, Canada Group, Cosmos Immigration and Education Corporation, Vance Financial Group, Hanyin Group, Lulu Island Winery, NTS International Group, and banks and accounting firms.

Members of the organization are also key leaders in the Taiwanese community, which numbers over 42,000 in British Columbia.

This cultural community has significant populations in the ridings of Burnaby South, Richmond Centre, Steveston—Richmond East, Vancouver—Granville, and of course my own beautiful riding of South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale.

I welcome them to Ottawa.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**LIVING WAGE HAMILTON**

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, more and more Canadians with full-time jobs are struggling to make ends meet. They make minimum wage, yet they still live under the poverty line. This is unacceptable in a country like ours, and it is fuelling the Living Wage movement that is gaining momentum in my riding of Hamilton Centre and all across North America.

Living Wage Hamilton, in partnership with the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, McMaster Community Poverty Initiative, the Social Planning and Research Council, Workforce Planning Hamilton, and the Hamilton and District Labour Council, is leading the call for a \$15-per-hour minimum wage in Hamilton. A living wage would ensure that someone who works a 35-hour workweek has enough income to live above the poverty line, and it would have significant impacts on reducing child poverty, improving health, and stimulating our local economy

The new NDP government in Alberta has pledged to raise the minimum wage in that province to \$15 by 2018, and New Democrats here have committed to a \$15-an-hour federal minimum wage.

I am proud to support the Living Wage Hamilton campaign. Together we can ensure that all workers earn enough to live with dignity and respect.

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**TAXATION**

**Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the New Democrats that they think that only the families who use licensed day care are real families. They believe that only a few select families deserve support in Canada.

We have brought in the universal child care benefit and the family tax cut to help all families with children. Unlike the opposition, on this side of the House we will always give money back to Canadian families, because it is their money and that is what is fair.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]**CONSUMER PROTECTION**

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, digital technologies have really helped our country flourish in recent years, but we have also noticed that not everyone has access to high-speed Internet, especially in the regions.

This problem was meant to be addressed with the digital Canada 150 program, but it appears as though Abitibi-Témiscamingue is not one of this government's priorities. We were shocked and saddened to learn recently that the project led by Gestion de l'inforoute régionale de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue was not selected to be part of the connecting Canadians program.

The project was rejected, even though it was a solid, high-quality proposal, according to the evaluators themselves. Nearly 98% of the people living in this vast area would have finally had access to high-speed Internet through this project. The rejection of this project was a rejection of the economic and social development of an entire community, and yet the project had the support of the public and all the elected officials in the region.

No matter. When the NDP comes to power, it will ensure that everyone across Canada has access to affordable high-speed Internet.

\* \* \*

[*English*]**TAXATION**

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader accidentally revealed his true thoughts when he said, "benefiting every single family is not what is fair." That is why he plans to take away income splitting, take away the universal child care benefit, and cut tax-free savings accounts.

These are just the clawbacks and the tax hikes that he admits, but even after all of that, he is still billions of dollars short of his spending plans. All of this proves that there would be more Liberal tax hikes coming from the same person who said that budgets balance themselves. Canadians cannot trust him or his party to do what is best for middle-class families, which is keeping taxes low so that they can spend on their priorities.

### SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago Parliament and Canada at large were in the midst of an intense yet generally dignified and democratic discussion about the recognition of same-sex marriage. Appellate courts began upholding the constitutionality of same-sex marriage, and as the minister of justice in 2004, I referred the matter to the Supreme Court. The court heard from some 27 intervenors before unanimously affirming that same-sex marriage was consistent with the Constitution, and I was proud to draft and introduce the Civil Marriage Act in February 2005.

It took effect 10 years ago this summer, enshrining two fundamental charter rights: the equality rights of same-sex couples and the fundamental principle of freedom of religion.

At the time, Canada was only the fourth country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage, and the first outside of Europe. Today, with the recent addition of Ireland, same-sex marriage is recognized in some 20 countries, with more to come.

This year, as we mark the 10th anniversary of the Civil Marriage Act as well as the 30th anniversary of the charter's equality rights provisions, we can be proud of Canadian leadership in matters of equality, freedom, justice, and human rights.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition would prefer that we sit on the sidelines in the fight against the death cult ISIS, a group that has carried out unspeakable atrocities and called for such horrors to be committed against Canada.

We cannot protect Canada by simply ignoring this threat. That is why our government is supporting military action in Iraq and Syria, taking action to stop the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, cutting off ISIS' funding sources, providing significant humanitarian assistance to victims, and supporting stabilization efforts to address local needs in the region.

Canada will continue to stand at the forefront of international efforts against this death cult.

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### WINNIPEG GENERAL STRIKE

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Winnipeg General Strike was the most significant turning point for working people in Canadian history. Before the strike was over, many were injured, some were killed and its leaders were thrown into jail on trumped up charges of sedition.

However, because of their courage and determination, Canadian workers won the right to organize, the right to free collective bargaining and the right to a living wage.

The lesson is that prison bars cannot contain ideas, just as revisionist Conservatives cannot sanitize history by eliminating the

### Oral Questions

exhibit paying tribute to the strike at their museum of selective history.

The Conservative government never misses a chance to undermine the rights of workers and the Liberals inexplicably even find fault that the NDP's staff enjoy the protection of union representation. It is clear that the old line parties cannot be trusted to respect collective bargaining.

I assure everyone that after October 19, the newly elected NDP administration will set the history books straight and ensure the trade union movement gets the respect it deserves in the story of the social development of our country.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### TAXATION

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government brought in the family tax cut and the universal child care benefit to ensure that Canadian families keep more money in their pockets. In contrast, the Liberal Party leader believes that making sure every family benefits is not fair. He wants to eliminate our family tax cut, our universal child care benefit and income splitting and replace them with a family tax hike.

We will not let that happen.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Director of Public Prosecutions has asked the police to look into laying charges against senior government officials for the destruction of government archives.

My question is simple: who gave the order to illegally destroy these documents?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is well aware that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police complies with all Canadian laws.

Even more importantly, it respects the will of Parliament. We are very proud to have put an end to a costly and ineffective registry and to be implementing measures that will keep people safe.

When will the NDP support our measures?

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to our "law and order" minister, the problem is that his government is trying to make an illegal act retroactively legal. That is contrary to the very foundation of our democracy.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Conservatives are retroactively rewriting a law to make this illegal act legal. Conservatives are cutting off an ongoing police investigation. Is it to protect someone on the Conservative benches? Who gave this order to the RCMP?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the budget implementation act is closing the loophole that prevents officers from respecting the will of Parliament.

However, what is behind this question is that the member and his party want to harass the law-abiding citizens of our country. We will stand up and not let it happen.

\* \* \*

• (1420)

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Exactly so, Mr. Speaker. No one rewrites laws retroactively for honest citizens.

They are retroactively rewriting laws to stop a police investigation. The Prime Minister's own chief of staff ordered an audit report altered to help Mike Duffy. Now Conservatives are blocking the release of the full details from the investigation on Senate residency. The Prime Minister is retroactively legalizing obstruction of justice.

Will the Prime Minister release the full Senate audit on Mike Duffy's residency now, for all Canadians to see?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition is serious about democracy, he should let members have a free vote on the common sense firearms licensing act, to restore dignity for law-abiding citizens. We will support that bill, close the loophole and defend Canadians.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Here is the foundation of our democracy, expounded by Dicey, that the law applies equally to everyone, Mr. Speaker.

*[Translation]*

Dicey and Lévis: it is not the same fight.

*[English]*

Is it not convenient that the Prime Minister's Office can doctor the Duffy report, but it cannot release it to the public?

*[Translation]*

The Prime Minister did say right here on April 22 that Mr. Duffy had signed a declaration before he was sworn in.

Will the Conservatives make that public, yes or no?

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the House knows, this case is before the courts, and we will allow the courts to complete their work.

However, as we know, whether it is a senator or a member of Parliament, when Canadian taxpayers see their money being used

inappropriately, they are angry. They have the right to be angry and to expect that money to be returned to them. That is why I would suggest that the New Democrats avoid the sad spectacle of having the Leader of the Opposition in court this summer trying to defend the over \$2 million that they owe the taxpayers. Do the right thing for the taxpayer and pay the money back.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** When the Conservatives get him to stand up, we know they are having a very bad question period, Mr. Speaker.

*[Translation]*

The Auditor General is now investigating nearly half of all senators for illegal spending. Ten other cases are being referred to the RCMP. That means 14 senators are currently under criminal investigation before the courts.

How can we trust that the issues before the Senate will be properly examined, when the Prime Minister's new official policy is to obstruct justice?

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as members know, it was the Senate that invited the Auditor General in to examine expenses, and we expect all senators to assist in this.

However, let me be very clear that it is the opposition, the NDP, that has 68 members who owe over \$2 million to Canadian taxpayers and another 23 who owe over \$1.1 million to taxpayers. They broke the law, and this summer we are going to see the sad spectacle of the leader of the opposition, his House leader and other members of his caucus before the courts trying to tell Canadians why they used that money. Avoid that and simply pay it back.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***SENIORS**

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' decision to raise the eligibility age for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement to 67 is unfair. This decision will cost our most vulnerable seniors \$32,000.

At the same time, the Conservatives are helping people who can afford to set aside \$10,000 every year by raising the TFSA limit.

Why are the Conservatives helping those who need it the least on the backs of our most vulnerable citizens?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when a senior loses his or her spouse, they inherit a little bit of money and they want to hang on to that money without having to pay taxes on it. When seniors sell their home because it is too large and they want to downsize to a place they can maintain more easily, that gives them a little more money.

That is why 60% of the people who max out their tax-free savings accounts earn less than \$60,000 a year. The Liberals want to raise taxes on the backs of those people.

*Oral Questions*

•(1425)  
[English]

**TAXATION**

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that TFSAs will cost the next generation tens of billions of dollars each year. A third of that cost will be borne by provinces that are already struggling to pay for health care.

The Minister of Finance once admitted that the new TFSA limit would create a problem and said “why don’t we leave that to [the] Prime Minister[s] granddaughter to solve that problem”.

Why are the Conservatives willing to mortgage our children’s future with a reckless plan to buy votes on the eve of an election? Will the Minister of Finance please answer this question?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I spent four hours yesterday evening answering questions, and some from the hon. member. I am happy to do it again and repeat the answers I gave before.

The TFSA is a wonderful way for Canadians to save for their first home, for their education and for their retirement. That is why 11 million Canadians have TFSAs, the vast majority middle and lower-income Canadians, with 60% who have maximized their contributions earning less than \$60,000 a year and those earning \$42,000 represent half of those who have accounts in TFSAs.

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker GIS is meant for low-income seniors, but the Conservatives have created a loophole where soon even the rich can qualify. Here is how.

If people maximize their TFSAs and delay other income until the age of 70, they could get the maximum GIS for three years while living off their TFSAs. This morning the PBO confirmed that this will lead to billions of dollars per year in extra GIS payments.

Why are the Conservatives raising the age of GIS for those most vulnerable Canadian seniors and leaving this loophole for wealthier seniors who do not need the help?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 600,000 seniors with incomes below \$60,000 are currently maximizing their TFSA accounts and they benefit from this measure. The Canadian Association of Retired Persons, CARP, strongly supports this measure.

I wonder what the member opposite will tell them. How will he explain why he wants to cancel this extremely important tax saving measure for retired people and for people in the lower and middle-income brackets? Why would the Liberals take this money away rather than give an opportunity for Canadians to save?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ETHICS**

**Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l’Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister appointed Mike Duffy to the Senate, and the PMO was directly involved in altering a report on senators’ expenses. His silence is unacceptable. The Auditor General’s next report will name 10 other senators who allegedly submitted claims for inappropriate

expenses. A total of 14 senators are now facing an RCMP criminal investigation.

Why did the Prime Minister’s Office intervene to protect senators who misused public funds?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is completely wrong.

It was the Senate that actually invited the Auditor General in to examine all of the expenses of the Senate. As I have said, if any senator is found guilty or has used money inappropriately, that senator should pay it back. If they have done something criminal, then they should face the full consequences of that.

It is no different for members of Parliament. Canadians work hard and they expect the money they send here to be used properly. When it is not, they expect it to be paid back. That is why it is important that the NDP pay back the millions of dollars it owes taxpayers; do it now and avoid the sad spectacle of court.

**Some hon. members:** Pay it back; pay it back!

**The Speaker:** Let us put a quick stop to any chanting in the chamber. It is unbecoming.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are hard working. They expect better from a government that is embroiled with 50 senators being investigated for corruption.

This is a scandal that begins and ends in the Prime Minister’s Office, from the potentially ineligible Senate appointments to the whitewashed audit. We learned from the RCMP that when it came to whitewashing the Deloitte audit, the Prime Minister’s key staff were heavily involved in discussions with the Senate.

Will the Prime Minister’s spokesman tell the House who in the Prime Minister’s Office has been discussing, with the key Conservative senators, the bombshell Auditor General’s report that is coming out next week?

•(1430)

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said, it was the Senate that actually invited the Auditor General in to examine all expenses of the Senate. If any senator is found to have broken the law, then of course taxpayers would expect that senator to face the full consequences of the law.

*Oral Questions*

However, it is no different for members of Parliament. There are 68 members of the NDP who owe over \$2 million back to the taxpayer, another 23 who owe over \$1 million back to the taxpayer, and this summer we will see the sad spectacle of the Leader of the Opposition and other members in court trying to defend that.

Canadian taxpayers want their money back.

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**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is pretty sad for a Prime Minister who promised us transparent government and hides behind the antics of that man. It says a lot.

Speaking of hiding, we know how the government has tried to drive the access to information system into the ground and obstruct the commissioner at every turn. Now we are learning that it is using summer students to vet government documents, including issues of cabinet confidences, issues of privacy, issues of timely access in which Canadians have a right to information.

This is just plain incompetence. Other than hiring students from Kijiji, does the government have any plan to address the terrible crisis of access to information in this country?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what I can say in this place is that there have never been more access to information requests that have been followed through on, that have been responded to. It is a record number. I believe it is 46,000.

That is the record of this government. The requests come in, they are processed, and they are responded to. That is the access to information regime. We are proud to have this open government that responds to the requests of the citizenry.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it turns out the Conservatives have also been hiding the facts when it comes to security issues.

The minister has repeatedly insisted that the Security Intelligence Review Committee has a mandate to fully oversee CSIS, but it turns out this is not the case.

Yesterday, the head of the Security Intelligence Review Committee said it cannot follow information once shared with other departments, yet this is exactly the power being dramatically expanded by the Conservatives.

Can the minister explain why he has once again been caught misleading Canadians on Bill C-51?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me just inform my colleague that economic action plan 2015 proposes to commit up to \$2.5 million over five years, ongoing, in additional funding to the Security Intelligence Review Committee, a Canadian institution, a Canadian model of which we can be very proud, and an example for the world.

When will the NDP get serious about terrorism, put its money where its mouth is, and support our budget?

[Translation]

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the problem has to do with more than just resources. The head of the Security Intelligence Review Committee himself says that the committee's mandate is too limited. Bill C-51 will allow our intelligence service to share information with 17 other agencies, but it will not allow the Security Intelligence Review Committee to know what these 17 other agencies are going to do with that information.

Why did the government not expand the committee's mandate as called for by the NDP?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that the Security Intelligence Review Committee has a broad mandate and can investigate all the operations conducted by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, here and abroad. It can even travel to other countries for that purpose. In contrast to the superficial parliamentary oversight that we see in other countries, the committee gets to the bottom of things.

Bill C-51 has the committee report to Parliament. We are obviously open to continuing to ensure that it is fully transparent and that it ensures that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service carries out its main mandate of protecting Canadians.

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness should know that Canadians are opposed to Bill C-51, mainly because of the lack of oversight. Yesterday, the head of the committee complained about being hamstrung when it came to overseeing the sharing of information between agencies. In the case of the Afghan detainees, it was the Department of National Defence, and not the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, that had the information. It is therefore simply impossible to investigate.

Does the minister think it is acceptable to limit the oversight of our intelligence agencies?

● (1435)

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am thinking about the Border Services Agency and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police: every institution has recourse and monitoring mechanisms.

It is important to remind my colleague that these measures were put in place to protect Canadians. The public understands, since a recent poll indicates that more than 71% of Canadians support our anti-terrorism measures. More importantly, these measures will be in place to truly protect the public. I thank my Conservative colleagues for supporting these measures.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec and the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec have reiterated their call for the Conservatives to protect the supply management system. The Prime Minister even said that Canada would have to make difficult choices in the trans-Pacific partnership negotiations, which is causing concern in Quebec's agri-food industry.

Will the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food meet with his Quebec counterpart to renew the Conservatives' commitment to protecting supply management? It is a simple question: yes or no.

[English]

**Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to promote Canadian trade interests across all sectors of our economy, including supply management. That has never prevented us from successfully completing other free trade agreements, such as free trade with Europe and South Korea. We make absolutely no apologies for ensuring that any deal reached must be in Canada's best interests. As always, we will only sign a trade agreement if it significantly benefits Canadian businesses, workers, and their families.

[Translation]

**Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if the past is any indicator, we cannot trust the Conservatives.

A government memo shows that the trade negotiations between Canada and Japan are still at a standstill after three years. What is more, Japan has rejected two invitations from the Conservatives to resume discussions this year. An agreement with Japan would contribute nearly \$4 billion to the Canadian economy.

What is the Conservatives' plan to bring Japan back to the negotiating table?

[English]

**Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we obviously know what the NDP's position is when it comes to trade. It has opposed virtually every single deal we have signed, and we have signed 38 since coming into office. Canada continues to engage with our Japanese partners to advance our trade interests both through bilateral talks and at the TPP. The TPP negotiations are at advanced stages, with all TPP countries focused upon concluding a comprehensive and high-standard agreement as soon as possible.

We will continue to negotiate with an eye to concluding the best possible agreement for Canadian businesses, workers, and their families.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP policy on trade is to have a transparent policy that brings good Canadian jobs to this country and helps Canadian businesses on the world stage.

While the Conservatives keep up their public bluster on trade, internal government communications tell a different story. Officials now admit that trade negotiations with Japan have ground to a halt. A good deal could be worth billions for our economy, but the Conservatives cannot even set a date for talks.

Why has the minister allowed this opportunity to stall, and what is he doing to get Japan back to the bargaining table?

**Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP has consistently opposed our efforts to open up new markets for Canadian businesses. In fact, it has an abysmal record when it comes to the trade file. The fact is that the NDP is ideologically opposed to any and all trade. New Democrats do not understand trade; they do not like trade. Only this Conservative government is focused on the priorities of Canadians when it comes to creating jobs and opportunities.

\* \* \*

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, PIPSC, the union representing government scientists, is asking for an unprecedented scientific integrity package in its collective bargaining agreement. Rather than asking for a raise, they are asking the government to unmuzzle science. They are explicitly seeking protection from "coercion to alter their data".

Canadians need to trust that government policies to keep us safe and healthy are based on objective evidence that has not been altered for partisan ends.

Will the President of the Treasury Board agree to this no-cost ask in upcoming contract negotiations?

• (1440)

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member is shilling for the union bargaining unit with its latest demands from the taxpayers. That is his right to do so, if he so chooses.

What we choose to do is bargain fairly and reasonably with the bargaining unit on behalf of the taxpayers to make sure we have fair and reasonable agreements that are affordable to the taxpayer, and we will continue to do so.

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Deschamps report found that the hostile sexualized climate in the military is so ingrained that the chain of command turns a blind eye.

However, Major General Whitecross who has been deputized to fix the problem admits that there is still little consensus within the ranks as to its seriousness at all.

For example, it took five months for Julie Lalonde to get an apology after being verbally attacked for giving a sexual assault prevention lecture at Royal Military College.

*Oral Questions*

The minister is missing in action on the Deschamps report and refused to attend Monday's committee meeting at all. Why, and when will he take personal responsibility and finally do something to restore a positive, supportive environment for all our men and women in this very important workplace?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this kind of question is par for the course for that member, unfortunately. The military takes this matter extremely seriously, and every one of the general command of the Canadian Armed Forces has expressed great concern about the issues addressed by the Deschamps commission.

In fact, it was the Chief of the Defence Staff himself who appointed Madam Justice Deschamps to do that report and who appointed Major General Whitecross to begin implementing a strategy for zero tolerance approach to sexual misconduct.

I appeared before committee for two hours just a couple of weeks ago. I am always happy to appear. Yesterday, I was chairing the cabinet committee, and sometimes our schedules do not mesh, but I would be happy to come to the committee.

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the minister is in denial.

[*Translation*]

The Deschamps report indicates that changes need to be made even among the senior ranks of the Canadian Forces to eliminate the culture of sexual misconduct. Officer cadets verbally attacked Julie Lalonde when she was giving a lecture on preventing sexual assault at the Royal Military College. She waited five months for an apology.

When will the minister show some leadership by implementing all of the recommendations in the Deschamps report?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is well aware that the Canadian Armed Forces is responsible for disciplining its members and ensuring that there is zero tolerance for sexual misconduct. That is why the Chief of the Defence Staff asked Ms. Deschamps to write this report. He put Major-General Whitecross in charge of implementing the 10 recommendations set out in the report. We will not tolerate sexual misconduct within the Canadian military.

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Major-General Christine Whitecross was clear yesterday in committee. The top brass apparently does not agree on the scope of the problem with sexual misconduct within the Canadian Forces. However, the Deschamps report was very clear. This is a systemic problem that has existed for decades. It will not be possible to change attitudes within the forces without some leadership from the government.

Will the minister finally break his silence and commit to protecting victims by putting an end to this hostile culture?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was under this government that the Chief of Defence Staff appointed a former Supreme Court justice to produce a fully independent and in-depth

report on the issue of sexual assault within the Canadian Armed Forces.

It was under this government that the Chief of Defence Staff appointed a general to manage the response of the Canadian Armed Forces, in order to develop a zero tolerance approach to sexual assault. That is the position of the Canadian Armed Forces and of this government.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, despite the clear findings of systemic sexual misconduct, harassment and assault in the Canadian military, and the failure to properly address it, Major-General Whitecross still finds that “there is little consensus as to the gravity of the existing problem” among leaders in the military.

The Deschamps report is absolutely clear that there is a culture of sexual misconduct within the forces that requires strong leadership to fix.

After making a public commitment to do so, why did the minister refuse to come to the defence committee yesterday and answer questions about his response to the report? When will he start to show his leadership and ownership of this problem?

• (1445)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the minister were to micromanage the military command, the opposition would complain about political interference.

I appeared at the committee for two hours the last time that it met. In fact, it was supposedly on the estimates, but the member opposite did not ask me a single question about the estimates.

Members know that I am very accessible to the committee. I was out chairing a cabinet committee yesterday. I am always happy to appear before the committee.

The important thing is that the general who has been appointed with the specific mandate to implement the recommendations of the Deschamps report was there before the committee. If the member would like, I would be happy to appear whenever our schedules mesh.

\* \* \*

#### CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has told Karen Talosig and her daughter Jazmine that they are not welcome in Canada because Jazmine is deaf.

Even though the BC Provincial School for the Deaf said that it has a spot for Jazmine, and the Burnaby public school board certified that no special funding is required for her education, to the Conservative government, being deaf apparently disqualifies her from becoming Canadian. That is so wrong.

Will the minister do the right thing and grant permanent residency to Karen and Jazmine?

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a letter was sent to Mrs. Talosig, in which we invited her to respond to the concerns that were raised about her daughter. Mrs. Talosig has 60 days to respond and address the concerns raised by these officials. This is an opportunity for Mrs. Talosig to explain how she will mitigate the extra costs to the provincial health care system because of a medically inadmissible dependant.

Until visa officials hear back from Mrs. Talosig on this, it would be inappropriate for us to comment further, as the final decision is yet to be made.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the 3,200 Haitians who are being threatened with deportation have only a few days left to regularize their status and apply for permanent residence.

A number of those individuals have not yet been able to apply. That is what we have heard from organizations like Maison d'Haïti in Montreal.

Quebec's immigration minister and the mayor of Montreal are asking for a three-month deferral. It is not complicated, it would not cost anything and there is no risk.

Why, then, is the minister insisting on refusing this simple request, which would help hundreds of families?

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has one of the fairest and most generous immigration systems in the world. We extended this generosity to the Haitian community for over a decade, allowing them to stay in Canada because of the unsafe conditions in their country.

We worked closely with the Haitian communities in Montreal and Toronto over the past few months, encouraging all Haitians who want to stay in Canada to begin the application process.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has lowered taxes and enhanced voluntary options so that Canadians can save more of their hard-earned money.

In contrast, the Liberals and the NDP want to hike taxes and hike CPP payroll taxes. Canadians know what this means. It will mean killing jobs and Canadians keeping less of their hard-earned money.

Would the Minister of Finance please tell the House what other voluntary options he would consider?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government understands that Canadians want low taxes and the freedom to make their own financial decisions. Building on our record of creating options for Canadians to save, like the tax-free savings account, I am pleased to inform the House that we are open to giving Canadians the option to voluntarily contribute more to the Canada pension plan to supplement their current CPP retirement savings.

What we will not do is reach into the pockets of middle-class Canadians with a mandatory payroll tax like the Liberals and NDP would do.

\* \* \*

• (1450)

[*Translation*]

**CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE**

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, two-thirds of the Champlain Bridge beams are in extremely poor condition. Seven central beams received the worst possible rating. The Federal Bridge Corporation Limited report is damning.

The Conservative and Liberal governments dragged their heels on this, and now the bridge is deteriorating before our eyes. People are very worried and want to see all of the reports.

Will the minister be transparent and tell us how it got to this point?

**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, users' safety is certainly very important to us. We have given The Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated all of the money needed to do the work. We had a vote in 2009; the NDP voted against. There was a vote in 2010; the New Democrats voted against. There was a vote in 2011; they voted against. They did so again in 2014. Then they come and say that safety is important. Seriously.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what we want to know—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, will 2015 see this minister and this Conservative government take responsibility for their mismanagement, incompetence, and failure to ensure proper maintenance of the Champlain Bridge, and for the risks the public is taking as a result?

**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, scaring the public with inaccurate information is this party's modus operandi. We have been working hard since we got here and will continue to work hard and spend the necessary money.

I want to commend The Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated on maintaining the bridges in Montreal, including the Jacques-Cartier, Champlain, and Mercier bridges. That corporation does excellent work and is responsible for bridge maintenance. It does a good job of it and the new bridge will be built three years ahead of schedule. We are working hard.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**CANADA POST**

**Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are angry over service cuts to Canada Post. People in Hamilton are protesting at a future Canada Post community mailbox site. Last week in London, residents spoke out at a community meeting angry because they were never consulted. A 94-year-old woman called my office, upset about having to wade through four pages of complicated red tape and get a doctor's note just to get her mail delivered.

When will the minister stop defending Canada Post and start defending Canadians?

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member will know that in 2014 Canada Post delivered 1.4 billion fewer letters than it did in 2006 and that two-thirds of Canadians currently do not have door-to-door mail delivery.

Canada Post must of course balance its finances without being a burden to taxpayers.

The NDP's plan for Canada Post would cost taxpayers a half a billion dollars a year, which means it would raise taxes on every single Canadian. We will not do that. We are keeping taxes low on this side of the House.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last year, Canada Post made a \$194-million profit. We can afford door-to-door delivery in our country.

[Translation]

Canada Post's decision to end door-to-door mail delivery is drawing the ire of more and more Canadians.

At a meeting of the Union des municipalités du Québec, the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs had to respond to angry municipal officials. What he said was that he would ask Canada Post some questions. He is two years late.

When will the Conservatives start listening to Canadians, and when will they get to work on restoring home mail delivery, which Canadians are entitled to?

[English]

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that member is spiking the proverbial football. Canada Post did not have to make a \$1.3 billion special payment to a pension plan. The member can tell that to the retirees. Canada Post has structural problems. Letter mail is declining at staggering rates. It has a plan to address that, and the member should let Canada Post get on with delivering on that.

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**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the current government is refusing to let the 15-year-old daughter of a Filipino live-in caregiver join her mother in B.C. It says a deaf child would be an excessive burden on the state. Really?

Many deaf persons in Canada are educated, high-performing members of society. The BC Provincial School for the Deaf says the child is proficient in American sign language and it is no more cost to educate her than any other child. Is the government's new discriminatory immigration policy that deaf persons need not apply?

● (1455)

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is shameful that the Liberal member opposite chooses to play politics with immigration cases. It is exceptionally much worse for them to be asking me about a case where a final decision is yet to be made. Independent and highly trained officers make decisions based on Canada's immigration laws.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister announced an infrastructure vanity slush fund widely described as a partisan pre-election stunt. He should be ashamed of himself. Not only does the program have totally different rules for every region of the country, but timelines are intentionally rigged so that the Conservatives can announce winning projects just before the federal election campaign begins.

Can the Prime Minister explain how it has come to this, how he has fallen so very far? With so many real needs for infrastructure investment in Canada, when will he stop playing silly partisan games with our tax dollars?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the 150th anniversary will be in 2017. If we want to have a project done before that date, we have to start the process and that is what we are doing now. In addition to our support for the 150th anniversary of the country, we will support renovations, expansions and improvements on existing community infrastructure. These new investments will support the implementation of projects all across the country, and we are proud of that.

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[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Port of Trois-Rivières must submit its expansion proposal to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency for assessment, but the Port of Québec will be conducting its own assessment of a similar project using its own criteria.

The consequences of expanding the port facilities are a source of concern for residents who spend their time washing patios and windows. Mario Girard would like the work to get under way quickly.

Will the people of Québec City have the right to a real public, independent assessment process, or is this a done deal?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course the Port of Quebec, as the member will know, is an independent, arm's-length organization that is responsible for its operational decisions. I know the member would like to make all of these decisions on the floor of the House of Commons, but that is what the agencies do. We expect, of course, that the Port of Quebec, like any port, would be in consultation with the communities that it is a part of.

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*[Translation]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government brags about being a law and order government. However, it has shut down a number of border crossings, including one back home in Franklin Centre.

Since 2012, the Canada Border Services Agency has lost more than 1,000 positions. The government has replaced border officers with cameras. Now we have learned that border officers do not have all the tools they need to keep us safe. That is pretty bad for a government that claims to be combatting terrorism.

Will the minister take action? The people back home deserve answers, and they have been waiting a long time.

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I would like to reassure her that we have increased the number of front-line Canada Border Services Agency officers by 26%. These officers do an excellent job of protecting the longest international border in the world.

We have a major capital plan for all of our border crossings. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the agency, because today it arrested two more people on the most wanted list. The officers are doing an excellent job and I salute them.

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*[English]***TAXATION**

**Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has brought in multiple measures to help middle-class families. Could the Minister of Employment and Social Development please update the House on the impact of our universal child care benefit and the family tax cut?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the universal child care benefit in its original amount and form already lifted 41,000 children out of poverty and into the middle class. I recently asked my officials to examine what the new increases that the Prime Minister has put forward would do to further reduce poverty in our country.

However, I was really discouraged to hear the Liberals today announce that they believed that seniors who put money in tax-free savings accounts should have their guaranteed income supplement clawed back. This is an attack on working-class seniors who have

done the responsible thing by saving for their future. We will never allow that to happen.

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● (1500)

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Information Commissioner warned the ethics committee that “the retroactive stripping of the application of the Access to Information Act is a perilous precedent”. This is related to the fact that the RCMP has destroyed government documents and the Information Commissioner has asked the Attorney General to lay charges. Put simply, the measures in the budget bill are a legislative coverup to protect the instigator of a crime.

Who in the minister's office ordered the RCMP to destroy government documents in violation of the law?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, from a member who had occupied an important cabinet position, I would expect more trust and respect for the excellent work of the RCMP and its professionalism. I am disappointed, but I can tell the member that, yes, we are closing a loophole to respect not only the Canadian law but the will of Parliament.

The member and his party would want to bring back the ineffective long gun registry. We will stand up for the respect of all Canadians who comply with the law, and we will support the budget as well.

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*[Translation]***INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Minister Fournier is not happy. After doing away with the community infrastructure plan in 2014, the Conservatives have now created the Canada 150 community infrastructure program to upgrade municipal infrastructure. However, in his rush to get his picture taken with big cardboard cheques right before the election, the federal minister forgot to do his homework and call the Government of Quebec to sign an agreement. That is not very impressive coming from a former Quebec mayor. Now, Quebec municipalities are excluded because of his forgetfulness.

Will the minister sit down with the Government of Quebec and sign an agreement?

**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, this is a federal program. My colleague needs to understand that the federal government delivers federal programs. We do not need to call the provinces. This is a federal program.

We did not do away with the program. It came to an end. We are going to continue to support the Knights of Columbus, the Daughters of Isabella, seniors groups and many other community organizations across Quebec.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Surrey are demanding action. Gang violence is threatening the safety of law-abiding Canadians, and we cannot stand aside while this violence goes on. Just last Sunday there was another senseless shooting, leaving residents of the area exposed to the drug turf war that is going on.

Could the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please update the House on what is being done to ensure our communities are safe?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her outstanding work in Surrey in making the community safer and working with leaders of the community. That is why I am proud to confirm that we are providing 100 more RCMP officers as requested by the government. We are also providing \$3.5 million, 20 times more than the Government of British Columbia asked us for. As well, 30 new measures to counter violence were adopted by our government.

We are standing in support of the people of Surrey.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, FD):** Mr. Speaker, as a plaintiff, I obtained a copy of the official languages commissioner's preliminary report on the National Energy Board's refusal to translate the documents on the energy east pipeline into French.

Oddly enough, the commissioner indicates that the Official Languages Act does not apply and that the documents submitted by TransCanada are not considered public communications, even though francophones have no other way of knowing where and how the pipeline will be built.

I have no doubt that the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages would think it was unacceptable if a company that was working on a pipeline project in Alberta published its documents only in French. The law needs to be changed. Will she do that?

• (1505)

[English]

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the National Energy Board takes its responsibilities under the Official Languages Act seriously. Any documents produced by the National Energy Board must be published in both official languages. Questions related to documents filed by an applicant should be directed to the project proponent.

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**THE MINISTRY**

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, this week the new Alberta government introduced a lean,

new cabinet of only 12 ministers, less than half the size of former premier Redford's grossly oversized version.

When the federal government assumed office in 2006, its original cabinet was 26 members, in the Prime Minister's own words, "designed for work—not for show", "more focus and purpose; less process and cost".

However, the current ministry has swelled to 39 members, by far the largest cabinet in the democratic world. Since the Prime Minister lacks the discipline to constrain the size of his cabinet, will the government support my private member's bill, Bill C-672, to statutorily limit the size of cabinet to a maximum of 26 ministers?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has been focused on ensuring that Canadian tax dollars are guarded carefully and husbanded carefully. That is why we have delivered, thanks to the leadership of our Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, a balanced budget this year. That is why we have the strongest fiscal position of any of the major developed economies in this world.

Everybody who is watching today knows there is only one party in the House of Commons that is seriously committed to taking care of tax dollars, and that is the Conservative Party and this government.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The member for Scarborough—Guildwood has six minutes left to conclude his remarks.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, prior to question period I was talking about bloodletting. It appears that bloodletting is not just limited to out-of-date medical procedures but is still living in on Environment Canada. The title of the document that I was reading from is called, "Environment Canada scientists told to toe the line". Until now, Environment Canada was one of the most open and accessible departments. One of the researchers was quoted as saying "They've been muzzled," says Weaver of the federal researchers. "The concept of free speech is non-existent at Environment Canada. They are manufacturing the message of science."

This is serious stuff. I am pleased that the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has brought forward this motion because the scientists who work for not only Environment Canada but also the rest of the federal government are under siege.

*Business of Supply*

Fifty per cent of them believe that there are cases where the health and safety of Canadians or environmental sustainability has been compromised because of political interference with scientific work. There appears to be no end to which the government will go in order to muzzle scientists, even to the point of compromising the health and security of Canadians.

Seventy-one per cent of them agree that our ability to develop policy laws and programs are based on scientific evidence and that facts have been compromised by political interference, much like my bloodletting example where the ideology gets ahead of the evidence. In fact, the evidence is that when it is, it is inconveniently ignored.

Forty-eight per cent of them are aware of cases where the department or agency has suppressed or declined to release information, which has led to incomplete, inaccurate and misleading impressions.

Seventy-four per cent of them think the sharing of government science findings with the Canadian public has become too restrictive. This is serious stuff.

Finally, 60% of the scientists of Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans believe that the government is not incorporating the best climate change science into its policies.

This is not just some sort of little academic excise. Last week, after Parliament rose, the Minister of the Environment told reporters, and in effect the world, that Canada was going to reach a target in 2030 of a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. That sounds like a good target. This morning she came before the committee on estimates and I asked her a very simple question. Could she state that 30% target in actual megatonnes? It was quite interesting. The deputy minister immediately took over the question, did not let the minister speak, and went into this rather complicated story of how this was a bit of a moving target. I agree with him that it is a moving target. This simple little lawyer asked himself: how can we actually state a 30% reduced target if we do not know what the number of the megatonnes to be achieved is? It is hard to say. It may be 20%, it may 40%, or it may be no per cent at all.

It is quite strange. We are starting with a target of 749 megatonnes as of 2005. Simple math would take that down by 30%, which is somewhere between 150 megatonnes and 200 megatonnes. One would think it would be easy to say that we expect to have a target somewhere in the order of 550 megatonnes by 2030. However, the environment minister is not even able to say that. Nor is the deputy minister.

This is either the result of the inability of Environment Canada to actually calculate the number or it is a result of the inability of Environment Canada to communicate the number. If in fact the number were stated in public as to what our megatonne target was in terms of greenhouse gas emissions reduction, then Canadians from all provinces, all stripes, would know whether this was a realistic target and would know how the government planned to get to this target.

•(1510)

This exercise in talking about how scientists are muzzled is very serious. It is very serious because policy is being made, being announced, and what is it based upon? The government chooses, for

whatever reason, to not put forward evidence on which to base its decision-making process. The consequence is that we have fantasy targets. The government's credibility is completely shot on this file and many others, and the consequence of the consequence, if you will, Mr. Speaker, is that ideology prevails, communication and speaking points prevail over all matters, and with respect to evidence, who cares? That is simply inconvenient.

I thank the House for the time and attention. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I look forward to questions from members.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, through you, I want to ask the hon. member if I could jog his memory a bit. In 2002, the Liberal government put out a communications policy. This is what it says about policy advisers, program managers, and other functional specialists, including researchers:

Their supervisors must ensure that the head of communications, or his or her designate, is consulted on all activities and initiatives involving communication with the public or which have implications for an institution's internal communications.

Further, it goes on to say that "Ministers are the principal spokespersons of the Government of Canada".

I wonder if that member can share with us today whether he agrees with the policy put in place by the Liberals in 2002.

•(1515)

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, I want to take note that in 2002, there were not masses of scientists gathered on the front lawn of Parliament Hill saying, "Free us" and "Allow us to speak". They started to gather only a few years ago when the policy of the government was enunciated by the then minister of the environment as having one department, one website, and one voice. The consequence is that scientists feel as if they cannot speak.

In fact, it has become so bad that even scientists who do not work for the federal government feel that they cannot speak. A doctor recalled speaking with the scientists at the Experimental Lakes Area in Kenora. According to him, even some non-federal government scientists are afraid to speak out, as their funding comes from the federal government.

As long as we have this climate of fear, this muzzling of scientists, the best evidence does not get out. Unlike 2002, where decision-making was based upon the best evidence available and was frequently in the public domain, it was in the public domain because the scientists of federal Canada put it there and were not afraid to do so.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about the experimental lakes, but we also have to look at the experimental farms, and one of them was in Kapuskasing. Again, we see that the government is not serious about the scientific research that needs to be done.

I agree with my colleague that the Conservative government has waged an ideological war on the scientific community. We have seen the slashing of \$1.1 billion. Even though the government says it has invested more, in reality it has slashed. It has also eliminated 4,000 federal researchers.

*Business of Supply*

Does my colleague see our ability to go by the results of research as being problematic, and how problematic is it to retain researchers in Canada now?

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, I think the best answer to my colleague's question is to read a headline posted on May 22, 2015 by Michael Rennie, a scientist with the Experimental Lakes area. The headline is "Ex-government scientist in northwestern Ontario says muzzling was part of "toxic" work environment". He said, "I think that Canadians are missing out by not hearing about our work".

In direct answer to my colleague's question, when an ex-scientist from Environment Canada, presumably no longer dependent upon the Government of Canada's largesse, says they were working in a "toxic work environment", we have to conclude that the best evidence in not getting into the public domain. The consequence is that the best policies are not being acted upon.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the the Minister of State for Federal Economic Development for Southern Ontario, who is very excited to speak to this topic as well.

I do not have much time, so for my colleagues opposite, as context of my speech I would like to remind them of the roles of the various organizations involved in the debate today.

First is the executive branch of the Government of Canada. The executive is comprised of the Crown, represented by the Governor General, the Prime Minister, and the cabinet. The executive is part of the government, which makes and implements decisions required to maintain the rule of law and well-being of Canadians. Ministers are assigned specific portfolios by the Prime Minister and oversee the operations of the government departments corresponding to that portfolio. Of course, ministers are accountable to the electorate. All of us right now are members of Parliament, so there is an accountability to the people.

The purpose of the Public Service of Canada is to serve the constitutional democratic state. By referring to the Public Service of Canada as part of the executive branch, it is suggested that its fundamental purpose is to carry out or execute state decisions. The state takes its decisions through legislatures, federal and provincial.

Civil society is the aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest the interests and will of the citizens. In an article entitled "Parliament and Civil Society", published in Ottawa on November 21, 2001, Jean Augustine said:

Parliamentarians are the link between civil society and government. Our responsibilities demand that we be in contact with the pulse of our constituencies, understand their needs and encourage citizen participation.

With the context and understanding of the role of the executive, the public service, and civil society, which comprises NGOs and our academic community, we look at the motion today. As ministers are primary spokespersons for their departments who prefer the government's communications protocol put in place by previous governments, we are still accountable to the Prime Minister and Parliament for presenting and explaining government policies. Of course, we are still accountable to others, but the point is that we have an accountability in the policies that we put forward. Therefore, it is an important delineation to make between the executive and the

public service, in which context we are debating research scientists today, as well as civil society.

I should also outline that a condition of employment for civil servants in the federal public sector is part of the values and ethics code for the public sector, as well as compliance with the communication policy of the government, which again the previous Liberal government had a hand in putting in place.

The interesting thing is that my colleague opposite who just spoke talked about masses of scientists protesting being the key difference between then and now, when they put in place that particular communication protocol. Since the scientific method is defined as "A method of procedure that has characterized natural science since the 17th century, consisting in systematic observation, measurement, and experiment, and the formulation, testing, and modification of hypotheses", I would like to test his hypothesis.

For anyone following at home, if they look on my Twitter feed, @MichelleRempel, they will see the picture from our Public Works webcam that shows the masses of scientists who protested that day. They will notice that there was a gathering of about 10 people. I took that picture because I knew this was going to come up in debate.

Therefore, let us use the scientific method to dissect the assertions in the motion today. It states:

That, in the opinion of the House: (a) the government has constrained the ability of federal scientists to share their research and to collaborate with their peers; (b) federal scientists have been muzzled and prevented from speaking to the media about their work;

I spent over 10 years in academic research management. I know a little on the subject. I would argue that some of the metrics to determine whether or not this assertion would be correct would be the number of media interviews given and publications made. I would like to focus on those two. However, there are other metrics as well, including research contracts that are gained, patents that are filed, and graduate students who are trained. I could go on, but let us focus on the first two, due to time.

There are over 1,200 Government of Canada social media accounts to disseminate information. We coordinate communications through the Government of Canada media policy in order to prevent duplication and redundancy in communications and to ensure we are not missing opportunities to communicate with the public.

● (1520)

In terms of specific metrics, in fiscal years 2013-14, 2014-15, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans conducted over 647 media interviews and responded to over 1,406 media inquiries in writing. In the calendar year, 2013-14, they put forward 900 peer-reviewed articles.

Environment Canada, in the same time period I believe, put forward 700 peer-reviewed articles. Last year, they conducted over 4,200 media interviews. NRC, in 2014, conducted 340 media interviews and put forward 724 scientific articles. NRCan put forward 472 media interviews. In total, federal departments have put forward over 4,000 science publications a year.

*Business of Supply*

I would like to put forward that Canada, even though we account for less than 0.5% of the world's population, produces over 4% of the world's research papers. We are the only country to have increased its share of research papers in the last decade.

In terms of hypotheses saying that we are muzzling scientists, based on empirical evidence and the fact that my colleagues opposite have only put forward four examples, which I would love to fact check, I think we have the numbers here.

Next, the motion says:

(c) research is paid for by taxpayers and must be done in the public interest in order to protect the environment and the health and safety of Canadians; and, therefore, (d) the government should immediately rescind all rules and regulations that muzzle government scientists....

It also says that it should be available to the public through “a central portal”. For those listening at home, they can go to open.canada.ca, science.gc.ca, publications.gc.ca. If they want to go into specific departments which are listed on those portals, because my colleagues opposite have not figured out how to navigate Google, I would point out that the National Research Council also has a publication portal, which I learned today that one of my Twitter followers put together.

I am happy to give my colleagues screen shots of this or show them how to navigate to those portals, if they are unfamiliar with Internet technology.

I would also like to highlight some of the other things we have done in terms of promoting access to information, such as my colleague, the Minister of State for Science and Technology announcing something that he can be so very proud of, which is our open access policy for research. It will allow Canadians to have free online access to research funded by our tri-council agencies. Congratulations and a big shout-out to all my colleagues at the tri-council, and to CFI. They are hard-working public servants.

If anyone wants more information on that particular policy, again refuting my colleagues' assertions, that was published on February 27, 2015. They probably should have Googled that as well before they put this motion forward.

The other thing I would like to put forward is that there are many factors involved in looking at whether a media request can be completed in time: Is the researcher available that day? Are there any intellectual property review policies that it is subject to? For example, is the research going to be put through a provisional patent process? Has the research been validated?

All of these sorts of things are the reasons we have communications specialists to support this. I would like to point out that I think there are close to two dozen communications experts at the University of Toronto, which of course is part of civil society and academic freedom. There are still communications experts there.

With regard to the final part of the motion about the chief science officer, I would like to remind my colleagues that in 2007 our government put in place the Science, Technology and Innovation Council. Its mandate is to have oversight of science and provide advice to the executive branch of government.

Also, if my colleagues have any scientists whom they feel are not being served well or have employment issues, the Treasury Board of Canada does have an employment dispute involvement mechanism.

I think we have covered all the bases. That is what the scientific method does.

● (1525)

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after that speech, I am just not sure where to go with it. The member has ensured that she has confused so many people with everything she has thrown out. I do not know that anybody really understood everything she said.

The reality is how we look at it. To put it into perspective, how do other countries view what is happening here in Canada? As I mentioned previously, the government has slashed \$1.1 billion and eliminated 4,000 federal researchers.

Let us look at the high profile muzzling cases. When we look at the prestigious British journal, *Nature*, which published two editorials, in 2010 and March 2012, it basically tells the Canadian government to set its scientists free.

Why is the government systematically putting in jeopardy Canada's scientific community and our sciences, which we need in order to be world leaders?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite just admitted that she did not understand what I said, so I will assume that she did not understand what she just said and present her with some facts.

Since 2006, our government has invested over \$13 billion in all aspects of the innovation ecosystem, from basic research through to commercialization. Canada leads the G7 in R and D performed by higher education as a share of GDP. We just invested over \$1.5 billion in the Canada first research excellence fund. We produce more than 4% of the world's published papers, and we produce 5% of the most cited publications.

Our academic community and our researchers punch above their weight, and these guys continue to vote against all of these budgetary measures. It is a joke.

● (1530)

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from Alberta does not understand how scientists communicate and what kind of communication is needed to convey and understand scientific research.

I want to read a letter I received from a scientist. It says:

Thank you for raising in the House the question of first-hand access to scientific findings. Our citizenry need to hear what is new in science, from the scientists who made the observations. Science...is not a catalogue of facts that can be passed on second-hand. It is a nuanced message that must be heard at its source, or it will be lost.

That is from Dr. John Polanyi, a Canadian winner of the Nobel Prize in 1986.

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The idea is that even scientists do not learn about what other scientists did simply by reading journal articles. If they work in the same specialized field, they can learn a lot from journal articles, but most of the time, scientists have a phone call or a chat in the hallway during a conference to really understand what each other did. That is why there needs to be a two-way conversation between scientists and journalists. It is so the public can understand what government scientists have done, and participate in the democratic process of deciding government policy.

Can the member answer that?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Mr. Speaker, the difference between Liberals and Conservatives is that the Liberals expound on esotericism. My colleague opposite claimed that I do not know what I am doing. However, I worked in research communications and administration for 10 years.

Let us go through how researchers communicate with each other. They communicate at scientific conferences, in which our researchers participate. They publish in journals; Government of Canada scientists publish more than 4,000 peer-reviewed journals per year. We also conducted thousands of media interviews just in Environment Canada.

On top of this is the fact that it has been our government, not the Liberal government, that year after year has steadily increased funding to the Tri-Council, including support for research communications. I give a big shout-out to the Tri-Council research communication officers, as well as at CFI, innovation.ca.

The Liberals have no idea what they are talking about here. They are backing a union ahead of negotiations, but Canadians know better because they understand the scientific method.

**Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to stand up in this House as the representative for Cambridge and North Dumfries, but it is also a pleasure to speak to this motion put forward by my friend and colleague the member for Kingston and the Islands.

While the member may wish to gloss over the facts, I will use my time to clearly demonstrate that not only does our government support the work of scientists, but we continue to make record investments to ensure that high-quality science is available to Canadians and is for the benefit of Canadians. I am going to speak specifically to the topic of science at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I would like to use the next few minutes to apply a bit of what has already been applied quite well by my colleague—scientific methodology—to the motion that has been put before us.

The member who put forward this motion would like members of this House and members of the public to believe that scientists face impediments when sharing their research. Once we review all the facts—of which many have come forward already and many more will come forward as this debate goes on—we find that the data does not support the member's motion. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

As my colleagues may be aware, one of the main methods scientists use for communicating their results to one another is through publication in peer-reviewed literature. Journals such as the

*Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences*, *Nature*, or those sponsored by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea provide a forum for reporting aquatic research and sharing the results of scientists' ideas with their peers. Through this interaction, science both is tested and inspires. It also focuses further work in areas where questions remain.

I do agree that this motion is conveniently put forward at a time of union negotiations, but contrary to what the member wants members of this House and the public to believe, the fact is that scientists at Fisheries and Oceans Canada produce a bevy of articles for these publications. In fact, in 2012 and 2013, scientists at Fisheries and Oceans alone published more than 1,000 peer-reviewed articles. I do not think even the member opposite has read that many. This is what they do in just a couple of years in one department. The list could be compiled, but I would recommend that my colleague simply visit the department's website where these studies are already posted for public information. I would encourage the member to do exactly that, to look up this website. However, I will warn the member that he will be embarrassed because he is also a scientist who clearly has not done his research.

Above and beyond this, the department publishes scientific documents for use by other scientists around the world and in Canada, by the public, and by the media. In 2012-13, Fisheries and Oceans produced 670 science publications documenting advice and research regarding Canada's fisheries and oceans. I would again encourage my colleague to visit the website of the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat to see the range of issues that are being tackled by government scientists and made fully available.

Canadian scientists are also regular participants, face to face, talking with one another, not just in hallways and laboratories—which we built, by the way—but also at scientific conferences around the world. In fact, last year scientists at Fisheries and Oceans alone participated in a wide range of meetings as collaborators, presenters, or simply representatives of this great country. Our government is committed to ensuring that our scientists are able to participate in these events that benefit our scientific knowledge, the capacity of the world, of course, and making the best use of taxpayer dollars. Canadians should expect nothing less.

Despite what the member, in this motion before us, would like members of this House and the public to believe, fisheries scientists have a solid record in presenting their findings and discussing their work with interested media. This is equally true of all science done at the federal level. When we look at all the facts, the truth becomes quite clear. When we apply scientific scrutiny to the member's motion, we clearly see that his hypothesis is false and is not supportable.

*Business of Supply*

●(1535)

While ministers are the primary spokespersons for their departments, and the opposition would be the first to criticize otherwise, over the last year alone Fisheries and Oceans responded to 834 science-related media enquiries.

In addition to its area of expertise, Fisheries and Oceans always gets questions that may not be within its expertise, so it refers that journalist to another department. That should not be considered denying information. That is simply referring to the actual expert for the journalist's questions.

It is clear that our government is proud of the excellent work our scientists do, particularly in Fisheries and Oceans. They are supported and encouraged to speak about the interesting scientific aspects of their work.

So far in my evaluation of the motion, my colleague, a good friend, unfortunately is zero for two. His science teacher would not be impressed. It gets worse. The motion also calls for the creation of a new layer of bureaucracy—of course, it does.

As I have clearly demonstrated, scientists are already supported in providing their research to the public through multiple avenues. This new bureaucracy would be completely redundant and entirely unnecessary, but it is of course typical of Liberals who love to grow government, create big bureaucracies, and spend other people's money.

Again, looking at the evidence at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, we see that our government has actively promoted the work of scientists through publishing their science, providing plain language summaries and even videos to provide Canadians with a clear picture of the work their tax dollars are supporting. We do not need a new bureaucratic layer and spending of more tax dollars to duplicate what is already existing, and existing well.

To give an example, the advice prepared for the minister, through the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat, is published online. It is all there. Through this avenue, the public is able to review the basis for the science advice that informs decisions and program development by Fisheries and Oceans. If the public is interested in the results of a particular study, the department has summarized a large number of the current research projects in plain language, readily available for review, including review by the member.

I think it is clear that communicating science is a priority for this government, and our record is solid. The evidence presented today, with more to come, demonstrates quite clearly that an abundance of access to the work of government scientists is already being provided.

From the information and evidence before us, it is also clear to me that Fisheries and Oceans works daily to ensure the public is provided timely, accurate science—and that is very important, that the science is checked and it is accurate, objective, and complete. That is exactly what it does for the public.

In addition to this commitment to public information, we are also, as a government, ensuring that our scientists have the tools they need to carry out their important research. That includes rebuilding dozens of laboratories.

Just a week ago, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced up to \$18 million in infrastructure investments for three major west coast science facilities: the Center for Aquaculture and Environmental Research, in West Vancouver; the Institute of Ocean Sciences, in Sidney; and the Pacific Biological Station, in Nanaimo.

As well, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans recently announced our government's commitment to work with partners, such as the Vancouver Aquarium and the Pacific Salmon Foundation, on collaboration at the West Vancouver lab.

We recognize, of course, that we are not the only game in town, that there are other players, and we want to pursue opportunities to make sure our scientists have the tools they need to do the best they can. That includes everything, all the way up to the Canadian Coast Guard, which has three vessels dedicated to scientific research and data collection. The list goes on and on.

One of the programs of which I am most proud that this government put forward was the knowledge infrastructure program, a few years ago, where this Conservative government put \$2 billion into colleges and universities to improve the research capacity in our nation, in that regard.

I believe we have clearly shot down the member's motion. The hypothesis is false and it should be retracted. I cannot possibly support it.

●(1540)

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I did a written order paper question to ask the government how it arrived at the figure when it claimed it had \$11 billion in new spending and now \$13 billion. I received a nice answer with a table. When I look at the table, I realize the Conservatives are counting new things, but they are not counting the things that they cut.

They put in an increase to the NRC IRAP, but did not include the cuts to the SR and ED tax credits. They put in increases to the granting councils, but did not include cuts to the granting councils. They did not include cuts because of losses to inflation. They are not including cuts in other parts of the government. They are not including cuts to research tax credits.

In the end, if we look at Statistics Canada's federal spending on science, technology and innovation, at the last year in constant 2007 dollars, the last year before the Conservatives took power, it is \$11 billion. The last year there is data, \$9.5 billion. Actually if we look at constant dollars and all across the federal government, spending has gone down. That is not even including the cuts to the tax credits for scientific research and experimental development.

I think the government's numbers are bogus in this respect, but I want to give my good friend and colleague a chance to respond.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Gary Goodyear:** Mr. Speaker, gobbledegook and of course people can use statistics any way they want. But here are the statistics that my friend should know.

When I took over the portfolio of minister of state for science and technology in about 2008, the last year of the Liberal government was spending less than \$5 billion a year on science and technology. This was after Liberals cut over 9% of the scientific budget. That was back in the time where they cut health care to the provinces, education to the provinces and cut science and technology straight out.

Today, this government spends more on science and research in this country than ever in the history of Canada. It is around \$11 billion a year. It is in fact 13 billion new dollars since we took government.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the Conservative member's speech. I also worked with him when he was minister of state for science and technology.

His speech gives us the impression that the current government has invested a lot in science. Does he therefore support our proposal to create a chief science officer position to advise the government? We need to bring science into the House of Commons and foster dialogue between parliamentarians and the scientific community.

Why would the government not invest in creating a chief science officer whose role would be to advise the government?

[*English*]

**Hon. Gary Goodyear:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, I think it is very sad when members stand who actually have not done their research.

We already have scientific advisers in this government. In fact, we set up the Science, Technology and Innovation Council, which is made up of 18 of the smartest Canadians to be found. This council has presidents of universities and leaders in the research world. Those 18 people advise this government and that advice is available to anyone in the House. It is not one person, that is what we had before. We have improved on that. Not one person advising the government on every aspect of science, but 18 of the smartest people this country can provide in a council that is available to the Minister of State for Science and Technology, available to the government and its reports are, guess what, published and open to the public to read any time they want.

One of the points my colleague previously mentioned that is worth pointing out is that Canada has 0.5% of the population of the world. We publish over 4% of the world's published articles in the scientific community. We punch way above our weight. A couple of years ago a survey was done with 5,000 of the world's top scientists and they said Canada science and technology is the strongest it has ever been and I totally agree.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver Centre.

I am quite pleased to be standing up on this issue. There are many scientists who live in my constituency. In fact, Macdonald College,

the environmental and agricultural sciences faculty of McGill University, is located in my riding.

Sometimes when I look at the government, I see a government that seems to want to look wistfully back at a simpler time in the past. I see this in its approach to a myriad of policy issues. I find it perceives the world sometimes not as a modern global village, messy and complicated, but as an old-style village, with its town square where staples are exchanged by local merchants and cottage industries. That kind of world is, for the most part, static. There is little or no innovation in that world. There are no environmental problems in that world. The word "environment" has not yet even been invented. There is no way to even conceive of environmental problems needing to be solved.

The water is clean, there are lots of fish, there is no threat to the local fishery or waterways from overfishing and pollution, there are no discharged pharmaceuticals in rivers and streams, there are rarely epidemics because the village tends to be insulated from the larger world. There are no oil sands or urgent need to discover alternative energy sources. There is no global warming or climate change. There are no melting glaciers, no GMOs, no preservatives in food. It is, more or less, a world without science and community decisions are simple. Usually they involve implementing and reinforcing, sometimes harshly, social norms, norms based on perceptions of what is right and what works to achieve the desired end, whether they actually work or make problems worse.

Reality is uncomplicated and observable to the naked eye, but this is not the modern world we live in. Most of what affects us is not readily observable to the untrained eye. Phenomena, whether pollution, disease, or even macroeconomic variables, must be studied carefully and rigorously by those who have dedicated their lives to understanding very specific specialized phenomena using a peer-reviewed scientific method.

We are talking today about the government's attitude toward its own scientists, wanting to limit the possibilities for these scientists to communicate with journalists and other Canadians, but muzzling also occurs through budget cuts. It reminds me of the way the government treated the Experimental Lakes Area about three or four years ago.

There was not just science at the ELA but world-renowned science. It was science that had the support of scientists and researchers around the world and the government treated it almost with disdain and really left scientists wavering for many months, at least one or two years, about what the future of the Experimental Lakes Area would be. It did this despite the fact that scientists were writing to the Prime Minister of Canada from around the world.

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As a matter of fact, I think the government received about 35 letters, many from scientists including scientific associations. For example, there were letters from David S. Schwartz to the Minister of the Environment, the Centre for Ecological Research, the Canadian Society of Environmental Biologists, the Japanese Society of Limnology, Global Lake Temperature Collaboration, and so on and so forth. There was a letter from the Ecological Society of Japan. Therefore, the government's reputation for treating scientists with a certain amount of indifference or disdain is not limited to scientists here who protest on Parliament Hill, who make documentaries like *Silence of the Labs*.

• (1550)

These expressions of concern and opposition to the government's attitude toward scientists did not come out of the blue and are not confined to scientists in Canada, who the minister will claim are part of some union negotiation conspiracy against the current government. These are international scientists, experts in their field, who understand that the government is not being fair to science and is not enlightened in its treatment of science and scientists. Therefore, as I said, muzzling is not just about telling scientists they cannot speak to journalists, it is also about funding cuts.

Another example that comes to mind in an area that I am particularly interested in is the way the government has treated the Maurice Lamontagne Institute in Quebec at the door of the Gaspé region. I had the opportunity to visit the institute about three or four years ago and I was awestruck by this facility in small-town Quebec on the shores of the St. Lawrence. It was conducting extraordinary research into aquatic biology. I saw its collection of artifacts of aquatic life. I saw its map-making department, which makes extraordinary maritime maps. However, the government has not invested properly in this facility. It is the only facility in Fisheries and Oceans Canada that operates in the French language, which I think is something important to consider.

In May 2012, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada issued a press release, which said:

According to our initial analysis, DFO will soon close the Laboratories of Expertise in Aquatic Chemical Analysis (LEACA) and dismantle the scientific team working on marine toxicology and chemistry. What we're talking about here is cutting 100% of the chemists and 25% of the researchers.

It seems to me, the last time I looked, that we have issues with pollution in our waterways. We need to research the impacts of some of the substances that are entering our waterways and being consumed or imbibed by fish, which later on make their way into the food chain, including in food for humans.

I will continue to read from this press release from May 25, 2012, which said:

There will be impacts on several levels: first, the federal lab (LEACA) will no longer be available to conduct chemical analyses in emergency situations (e.g., oil spills). The lab also works on improving detection methods for new toxic molecules accumulating in the aquatic food chain.

The absence of monitoring of the biological effects of chemical compounds (PCBs, heavy metals, pesticides, organochlorines, antibiotics, etc.) in the aquatic environment raises concerns for the health and safety of many species and the people who consume them.

A government that believes in public science does not make those kinds of cuts.

We understand what copyright is all about, and we need copyright in the marketplace. Those who pay for research should benefit from it, and obviously they do not have to share it with their competitors in a competitive marketplace. However, we are talking here about publicly funded research, and so the copyright belongs to the people of Canada. The government does not have a right to keep that information, the fruit of that research, from the people of Canada.

I understand that we do not want public servants going on a crusade against an elected government. We understand that. However, there is a middle ground. I believe that in the United States federal researchers are allowed to speak more freely, but they have to make it clear that they are speaking in their own name and are not somehow enunciating a government policy.

I think that if the government were creative, if it would let go of the reins of control a bit, it would see the benefit of the free market of ideas. This is in fact the strength of democracy itself. Democracy is all about making information available to the widest number of people, because somewhere, at some point, one of those people will have the insight that solves a very big problem.

• (1555)

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, again, this is an issue that is so important for us. Without research and without an ability to understand the research that is out there and without the ability for researchers to provide us with that information, it becomes quite problematic.

When we look at the Conservatives' record, we see that they have cut funding to over a dozen research programs and organizations across the departments, including Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Library and Archives Canada, the National Research Council of Canada, Statistics Canada, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, the National Council of Welfare, and the First Nations Statistical Institute.

When we look at that, we see over and over again how the government is not only trying to muzzle scientists but also trying to limit the amount of information out there so that it does not have to react to it.

I wonder if my colleague would elaborate on the fact that if knowledge and research are not available either to us as parliamentarians or to the general public, we cannot determine where we need to go in the future.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, that is the crux of the issue.

Scientists, especially scientists outside of government, can sometimes work with parliamentarians to raise issues. I remember meeting Dr. David Schindler a few years ago when he came to see the MP I was working for because he wanted to share his concerns about certain decisions that were being made at the time.

*Business of Supply*

However, without the ability to obtain information and to raise concerns with MPs and other politicians, not just on the opposition benches but on the government benches, it is very hard to hold the government to account and to suggest better ways of proceeding and better decisions that could be made.

• (1600)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his speech and recognize him for his work on water issues over many years. He is certainly one of the experts in this House on water, and I want to direct a question on that particular issue that concerns fracking.

A couple of weeks ago at the environment committee, I asked the officials present what they would do if I poured into Lake Ontario, opposite from my riding, a list of chemicals. There was a list of six or seven chemicals, all of which are hazardous to human health. They basically told me they would lock me up quite quickly and that I would be subject to a half-million-dollar fine and potentially two years in jail.

I said, “That is kind of interesting, because that is the kind of stuff that is actually going into fracking holes. What are you doing about that?” They said, “Well, we are monitoring.” I said, “That is interesting. While you are monitoring, there are things that are potentially happening to the environment, because somewhere between a third and a half of the water that is put into a fracking hole comes back up and has to be managed.”

Therefore, I would be interested in the hon. member's views with respect to the scientists' ability to get hold of what is going into these fracking holes.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, as usual, my colleague asks deep and pointed questions.

I have asked the government a couple of times in this House about fracking and about its perspective on the issue and whether it would become involved on a meaningful level, and we always get the pat answer that this is not a federal problem and is not an issue that the federal government should really be concerned about.

If we take that attitude at face value, it means that the government is not really committed to knowing more about the issue. That means as well that it is not committed to funding the research that is required to answer the kinds of questions that my hon. colleague has just raised.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this motion because it gets to the heart of how good public policy is made and how the public is informed of new information that can help them to live healthier lives and to have safer lives.

Muzzling scientists does not allow that information to get out to the public. However, I can understand why the government wishes to do muzzle them. I can understand why the government does not want scientists to speak out, does not want an informed public, does not want an informed Parliament. It is because it allows Conservatives to freely pursue ideological public policy-making as opposed to evidence-based public policy-making.

It also allows the government to not be held accountable for what it does, because no one knows if evidence is coming forward and no one knows what the scientists have said, so no one can actually hold

Conservatives accountable for what they may be doing right or wrong. They cannot be judged in terms of the public policy. Only after the fact, when the harm has been done, can one draw attention to bad public policy, but the evidence in other countries is that new public policy is emerging all the time based on good science and good evidence.

However, it is not only about the muzzling of the scientists. When scientists cannot talk to the media or even peer groups about their findings, that information is not disseminated broadly. As a result, other scientists who are working on different projects and are looking for that piece of science to help them to fit into the jigsaw puzzle that may click for them cannot move forward in what they are doing.

Science is shared globally today. Canada has moved forward and become a really important country because of our sharing of information through centres of excellence. They were this country's initiative, and now other countries in the world are following the centres of excellence, where people share their information openly, so it is about the muzzling, but it is also about the lack of the ability for science to move forward in this country.

When 800 scientists from over 32 countries wrote a letter to the Prime Minister asking him to stop muzzling science and to use science and evidence-based information to make good public policy, it was significant, because scientists by and large are not people who seek the limelight. They like to talk to their peer groups. They like to get information out to the public in a very non-self-centred manner. For them to stand up and speak out loudly speaks worlds about how much damage is being done by the government's position on science.

When we have the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada saying that half of federal scientists report being aware of actual cases in which the health and safety of Canadians or environmental sustainability has been compromised because of political interference with their scientific work and when we have nearly half being aware of actual cases in which their department or agency suppressed information, leading to incomplete, inaccurate, or misleading impressions by the public, by industry, by the media, and/or by government officials, we are talking about a very dangerous precedent.

The government seems to distrust or mistrust scientists. It seems to want to ignore evidence. We know that many of the public policies that come out of the government come out of ideological decision-making. Conservatives decide what they want to do, and then they shut everybody down so that no one can say what they are going to do is wrong or does not have any kind of evidence base.

In regard to health and public safety, the government is treading on very dangerous ground, and I will give some examples in a few minutes.

Let us talk about basic data and the shutting down of data—not just scientists, but basic data in this country.

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Under other governments prior to the current one, Statistics Canada was world renowned for having the best data. People followed Statistics Canada data to get the information they needed. After the government shut down the long form census, the chief statistician, Munir Sheikh, said that the quality of the data now being collected by the national household survey is destined to deteriorate to the point that it becomes “a piece of garbage”.

• (1605)

Response rates went from 94% in the 2006 long form mandatory census to 68% in the 2011 national household survey. Now we are not able to get data about how people are faring, about the quality of their lives, about jobs, about anything. Businesses and everyone needed data, but the government shut it down.

Let me give some examples about health and safety in which ideology is being used instead of evidence. That concerns me a great deal. I am going to talk about Insite Vancouver.

Insite Vancouver was a project by the University of British Columbia. It was a well-regulated, well-thought-out project. It had 24 peer reviews internationally, and those 24 peer-reviewed studies supported all of the evidence. They looked at the process and how it was done and said this was an excellent piece of work.

The fatal overdose rate in the Downtown Eastside decreased by 35%. I am talking about evidence now, not just the data gathered. Overdose deaths decreased by 35 % after the opening of Insite. Clients began to connect with addiction treatment. These were high-risk people who did not want to talk to health care providers or did not want to seek help. Suddenly a 25-bed unit had to be built above it to take in the people who wanted to detox. It showed that the likelihood of stopping injection drug use was very high.

The facility opened, and it was associated with a 30% increase in detoxification. It also reduced public disorder by 50%. Then the Supreme Court had to step in. The provincial government, scientists, and all of the health care facilities in British Columbia had to take the federal government to court, because when it shut down Insite, lives were put at risk. People who were going to go into detox were no longer able to do so. There was also an increase in the rate of hepatitis C and AIDS in epidemic proportions in that particular part of Vancouver, the Downtown Eastside.

The Supreme Court stepped in and ruled that, in fact, the right to life, liberty, and security of the person would be infringed if Insite was shut down.

What was even more disconcerting was when the hearings of HESA, the all-party parliamentary committee on health, came about and the minister was asked why he would do this, he said there was no evidence or scientific proof, even though I just laid out all of the data and scientific peer reviews that said Insite was worthwhile.

What also happened was that when the Chief Public Health Officer was asked what he thought of that particular project and the 24 peer reviews, he actually said that they were sound. He said that the methodology was sound, that the results were sound, that it was a scientifically sound result, but he could not answer questions because he was muzzled.

I heard one of my colleagues in the Conservative Party say earlier on that there was a rally and only a fistful of people turned up. I think that people are afraid of losing their jobs. They are scared of the government. This is a terrible situation we are in.

We also heard some misinformation coming from the secretary of state. He said that Canada had spent no money on research and development. In 1993, Canada was seventh in the G7 in terms of public research and development. By the year 2000, because of money spent by the Liberal government purely on public research and development, we were number one in the G7. Today we are not just back to being number seven in the G7; we are 16th in OECD countries. This is how fast this country has fallen into disrepute.

I could on about advisers and scientists within Health Canada advising cutting salt levels in half by mandating that. They have talked about how they have looked at levels of sugar and levels of trans fats, but the government refuses to listen to their own scientists, their own scientific advisers. We hear from inspectors and scientists who look at the amount of E. coli in beef currently and say that the public is in danger, yet the government will not listen. Instead it denigrates the science and information and personally attacks people, and scientists are afraid.

I am glad to see that they are standing up. I support unmuzzling scientists. I support the idea that Canada should get back to spending the right amount of money on research and development and stop ideological decision-making, because people's health and safety are being compromised by the government and its attitude.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. Thanks to her experience, she was able to demonstrate the importance of science and especially of the communication that should be happening between the scientific community and parliamentarians. She showed that we need that communication to make informed decisions.

Her colleague's motion covers many different angles. I would like her to comment on the cuts at Statistics Canada, their impact, the fact that the long form census was abolished, and how that science and that knowledge are now lost to Canada forever. It is now becoming more and more difficult to get a detailed picture of our economy, our society and our health.

[*English*]

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Speaker, that is an important question. If we do not have information and we do not have data on all segments of the population, all cities, small places, large cities, small areas, we do not have an understanding of where we are in time. How would we know how to create public policy to tell us where we are going when we do not know where we are?

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I would like to again quote Munir Sheikh, the former head of Statistics Canada. He said that because of the cutting of the long form census and moving to this voluntary household survey, the data collection in our country would become “a piece of garbage”. The response to the mandatory long form census was 94%. Now it is 68%. We do not know the status of people's incomes, their job descriptions or their health. We do not know the status of anything.

Therefore, not only does industry not know how to make policies, but government does not know where to go to make policies. We have no idea of the lives of Canadians. I do not know of any country in the world that does this. It is such an ideologically-based problem.

• (1615)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, because the hon. member is from B.C., I want to ask her a question with respect to Kristi Miller's experience. She is the scientist with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. She published an article about sockeye salmon in the prestigious journal *Science*. She was told by officials that she was forbidden from speaking to the media about her groundbreaking findings. This is not just something that is of academic interest and a sort of cute little factoid, the sockeye salmon industry in B.C. is a serious industry.

Has the hon. member thought about the Liberal leader's approach to this issue, which is that all information is open by default unless the government can demonstrate otherwise?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Speaker, that is extremely important. One of the things about this motion is it suggests that we should live an open society in which we share important information, communicate that information and disseminate that knowledge to the public and to other groups that make policies of any kind, whether industry or governments. In fact, only when there is the possibility of a security risk should certain information be kept confidential and in camera and this kind of open dissemination not apply. That is what happens in a free and democratic society. After all, taxpayers are the ones who pay for the research that the scientists do, especially in government departments. When the taxpayer cannot get that kind of information, I call that an abuse of public funds.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate and to indicate my support for the motion.

It is important we recognize that the work of scientists, who work for the people of Canada, is extremely important. The information, the studies they conduct, the research they produce and the results they come up with are extremely important. Canadian taxpayers pay for this important research that is being done, all levels of inquiry, and it is something to which Canadians should have access.

My critic area is the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Therefore, I talk to scientists who look at lobsters, for example, and the impact of warming temperatures on them, how they migrate, when they molt, what it means to their spawning areas with the closeness of salmon pen farms to them and where they are in relation to various outflows. This is all extremely important information.

I will be splitting my time, Mr. Speaker, with my colleague, the wonderful MP for Louis-Hébert, and I look forward to hear what he has to say about this important issue.

Again, on the issue of lobsters and salmon, so much work needs to be done. There is the impact of climate change, for example, on not only marine life but on the ice in the north and the impact that has on various cultures and communities. It is extremely important information, which I would suggest needs to be done in partnership with Canadians, universities and private sector scientists. However, there needs to be a strong public component, and Canadians have the right to have access to that information.

I cannot say how many times I have been at meetings and conferences where I have listened to the people who do the research. I heard scientists say that their request to speak to a group on their particular research was declined. Some received media interview offers or whatever. People had found out about their work and were interested in it because it was an interest to the community, or in the case of lobster, there was an interest from all Atlantic provinces, but their political masters denied them that opportunity. In most cases, with all public servants who are under the control of the federal government, there is a very strenuous, rigorous protocol that they need to follow before the Conservative government will give them permission to speak.

It is interesting that the Conservatives talk about getting rid of red tape, making things more efficient, streamlining the activity and work public servants do in providing services, whether that be information or handling employment insurance claims, yet they encumber the processes to such a degree because of their fear of information going astray or their desire to control the message at all times and at all levels, which is ironic beyond belief.

During this discussion about the muzzling of scientists, I listened to a couple of government members recite all kinds of facts and figures about evidence of how the government was supporting scientists and allowing them to communicate.

• (1620)

The reality is that since the Conservatives gained a majority in 2011, and certainly before that, they have cut funding to science programs. If truth be known, this all started back when the Liberals were in power. However, they have also been cutting programs themselves. For example, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' budget has been cut upward of \$1 billion over the last four years, and a great deal of that has had to do with scientists. My colleagues have talked about how 4,000 scientists have been let go by the government.

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We heard a story last week about a gentleman in Halifax, a scientist for DFO, Steve Campana. He does world-class research. He was afraid, like a lot of his colleagues, to speak out until he retired. Once he retired, he shared his feelings about how the government was controlling his work and the work of his colleague, and that not only were the some of the waters becoming toxic but, more important, the environment in which these people work was becoming toxic.

Some senior research scientists in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and other departments cannot wait to retire. If they could afford it, they would retire sooner. Some of them are leaving and going to the private sector, because they just cannot take it anymore.

On the other end of the employment scale, I have visited a number of universities across the country that are extremely concerned with the lack of support for post-doctoral work in sciences and, in my experience again, in the whole area of marine science where Masters and Ph.D. students do important scientific research on areas such as the impact of increasing temperature, the impact of the changing chemical composition of the ocean, the impact on the marine life, on the biodiversity of our coasts, of our oceans as a result of the increase in ocean acidification, for example. This is a serious problem as a result of the carbon dioxide emissions that are being held by the oceans. The volumes are getting so large that it is affecting the chemical composition of the ocean, and that is having an impact on marine life, whether it be crustaceans or other things. We need to know what that impact is.

We need that research to be done, and we need it to be done by scientists. We see the research that is being done at our universities. Because Ph.D. students are unable to get funding for post-doctoral work here, those brilliant minds go to other countries. They are going to Nordic countries, or to Europe or to the United States to continue that work.

We have funded that. We have supported that research. The students have made an incredible contribution, and we have just simply let them go. That is what has been happening under the government. That is the problem. It is a combination of muzzling and a lack of support.

We have a list of programs that have been cut by the government since 2011, and it certainly goes beyond that. I said that DFO had been cut by \$1 billion. Environment Canada, Libraries and Archives Canada, Department of Fisheries and Oceans Libraries, the National Research Council have all had cuts, and on it goes.

We need to start respecting our scientists and researchers and the role of the public sector and ensure that work gets done.

• (1625)

**Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. It is great to hear him speak. Sometimes he does go off on facts that are not actually there.

However, one thing he did talk about was support for post-docs. I am sure he is aware that there is now more support for things like internships, mentorships, apprenticeships and all these different things we have in Canada, more than ever before in the history of the nation.

I am sure he is also aware that when a scientist applies for funding, of course other scientists decide whether that science and that research is valid enough for funding. The government does not do that. However, when scientists apply for hundreds of thousands, or millions, of dollars to do research they can also apply for the equipment to do that research. They can apply for support staff, like post-docs to do their research. They can even apply for the hydro that operates the laboratory. That is how much money is available from our government.

In fact, I want to ask the member, since he claims to support post-docs, would he now support the federal government's budget because in the budget, the Canada Foundation for Innovation would be receiving an additional \$1.33 billion over six years. That is exactly the money that would support the post-docs and what the member is complaining about.

The solution is clear. Will he vote for the budget, yes or no?

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, this is the case with any criticism that is brought forward against the government. It completely denies it and comes up with its own facts and figures in order to try to confuse the matter.

However, when we talk to scientists, researchers and the universities it is not in front of the minister because they do not want to jeopardize the bit of money they do get, the little support. Remember we are talking about muzzling. When we get them away where they can talk openly, they are telling us the government is failing to provide the kind of support those young scientists need to go forward with research that needs to be done in our communities and our country and to be able to share that information with Canadians.

Let me just add, the internationally known Bedford Institute of Oceanography is in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Recently, the government granted \$3.5 million. However, what was that for? It was for—

• (1630)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please.

The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance to speak to this very important motion about respect, trust and valuing of scientists in Canada.

In my riding of Vancouver Quadra, we of course have the University of British Columbia, which is one of the top universities around the globe in terms of its achievements and excellence. It has over 65,000 students on its two campuses. UBC is responsible for a quarter of all research conducted in British Columbia and there are many areas of emerging excellence in research in social sciences, forestry and the humanities.

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I was actually there recently looking at some of the research on sensors to understand earthquakes. It is so important that we nurture, value and attract scientists. It is shameful that they are having to go onto Parliament Hill to express their concern.

My question—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. Could the member quickly move to her question? She has ignored several indications from the Chair to hurry up.

**Ms. Joyce Murray:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask my colleague, is there any human endeavour, city, country, marine, terrestrial or the like that does not benefit from the knowledge and interactions and research results of our scientists?

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, my answer is no.

In answer to the previous question about the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, the government allocated \$3.5 million. I was thankful, but it is important to know that had nothing to do with science or research. It had to do with plugging the leaks in the windows and the doors and repairing the roofs.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Before we resume debate, I would just like to remind all hon. members that the Chair gives them an indication when their time is coming to a close. With five-minute questions and comments, members need to keep their questions and responses to about a minute. Failure to do this leads to fewer other members having an opportunity to speak to the bill.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by quoting Albert Einstein: “Coincidence is God’s way of remaining anonymous.” Although he said many things, we do not often hear that quotation.

I found that quotation very appropriate, because today is one of those rare times when we talk about science in this House. I want to congratulate the member for Kingston and the Islands for moving this motion because it is something we rarely talk about, but something that is so important in today’s society, that it would be a serious mistake to ignore it.

The current government policy on science focuses strictly on innovation. This approach reduces the importance of science as a tool for development in a broader sense, because if it cannot be immediately useful, the Conservatives take no real interest in it.

Furthermore, the motion addresses the muzzling of scientists. As many people have pointed out today, we need to differentiate between the sharing of knowledge and public policy. Everyone knows that public policy is the realm of politicians and that sharing knowledge falls to scientists. It is therefore crucial that we trust the ethics of scientists to make that distinction.

If what scientists say ever becomes embarrassing, a responsible government should take that opportunity to improve whatever needs to be improved for the common good. We can use those instances to improve our society.

In my riding we have a university and a high tech park. The scientific research continuum is very important to Louis-Hébert. Aside from the education sector, obviously, the continuum starts with basic research. That is where it all starts. Then, there is applied

research, commercialization—meaning publicizing it—knowledge transfer and innovation.

That is why there is a high tech park associated with Laval University. A number of good ideas made it through all of these steps, and as a result we have some value-added industries with a strong focus on science in the Quebec City high tech park.

Innovation is the end of a process. It is not a beginning or an end in itself. Innovation must go through all of the steps I mentioned. If we make innovation an end in itself, I worry that we are making Canada less competitive over the long term. It shows a lack of foresight of the development of our society and of our ability, as a country, to compete with other high-tech countries.

In 2012, Yves Gingras, a professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal, wrote an article entitled “From Science Policies to Innovation Strategies”. In this very short but informative article, Mr. Gingras illustrated how governments’ science policies have changed over time.

For example, from the 1960s to the 1980s, the government had science policies, but in the 1980s and 1990s, during economic crises, for example, the government’s policies gradually moved towards technology and, now, innovation.

The objective of the article was to illustrate how we went from a desire to produce knowledge, in the broad sense, that the various spheres of society could use, to more specific applications of existing knowledge.

• (1635)

By all accounts, this has a fundamental impact on our perception of government operations, programs and what gets subsidized. Université Laval is in my riding. I am told that although the government is increasing funding, money that goes to basic and applied research is drying up. In fact, certain areas involving innovation are being heavily subsidized instead. No effort is being spared. Abandoning basic and applied research will allow for short-term gain, but will be costly in the long run.

Limiting scientific research and innovation is tremendously short-sighted. There are two opposing ideas in the debate we are having today. We have not really put a name to it. On one hand, the government is proposing a knowledge-based economy. The policies on innovation attest to that. On the other hand, we would like to go back to a knowledge-based society, a society where knowledge and expertise are disseminated and shared in every part of society, including the economic sector. It is more encompassing. It is important to see how these two concepts compete when it comes to economic policies and proposals.

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We cannot envision a society without being able to make the distinction between the two. I much prefer a society based on knowledge, where every aspect of society has access to knowledge and where this knowledge is shared as broadly as possible. Obviously, that does not mean we must not invest in a knowledge-based economy. However, we must not make it an end in itself.

What is important in our society today is to have the ability to generate, disseminate, share and use knowledge. We need to look beyond the almighty economy. Of course, we need money to live on. We need all that and that is what is most important, but if we still want to be on the cutting edge in 5, 10 or 20 years, it is important and fundamental to be able to consider science, scientific research, communication and the dissemination of information as key elements. In 2001, Quebec had a science policy that took all of those factors into account. That made it possible to develop a consistent set of policies that encompassed every aspect of knowledge development. Finally, we need to trust in science and the ethics of scientists. We will be better off for it.

In closing, I would like to quote a 19th century Algerian, Abd el-Kader, who said:

Good and sound knowledge means understanding in such a way that one can see the difference between telling the truth and telling lies in speech, between truth and falsehood in beliefs, between beauty and ugliness in actions.

• (1640)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Before we move on to questions and comments, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, International Development; and the hon. member for Montcalm, Social Development.

[English]

Questions and comments, the hon. minister of state.

**Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do get a little frustrated when I hear people simplify what we do with science in Canada. We do not just do basic science, and we do not just do science for the sake of the economy. We actually do all of it, and we should.

I have a good example, and I want to ask the member if he would agree. When we fund scientists to do basic pure-sky, blue-sky discovery research and they discover something, what is wrong with moving that discovery out of the laboratory and into our hospitals or living rooms of the world? We have done that hundreds of times in this country.

As one example, we had a young lady take a discovery that a scientist was not actually looking for. He was looking for something else, so on he went with government money to keep doing his basic research. However, the discovery went off to a young lady in southern Ontario who developed a company around it and hired a ton of people. It was making money and saving a lot of patients with macular degeneration. That is what scientists should be doing. Knowledge that is not used is of no value. We do both in this nation. Why does this member not support our science budgets, at least once?

• (1645)

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Blanchette:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

Had he listened carefully to my speech, he would have understood that I am most definitely not opposed to the use of knowledge. Once again, what I said was that government policies have resulted in a significant shift in funding. Right now the government is making massive investments in innovation. That is an official government policy, and I believe that my colleague would agree with that.

In my riding, people doing basic and applied research say that there is a lot less money for their work and that they have to reconsider the purpose of their research. That is unfortunate and dangerous for our society.

[English]

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would be interested in the hon. member's comments on a discussion between Raveena Aulakh, who is an environment reporter, and Dr. Tom Duck, a leading atmospheric scientist. They were commenting on the 2007 gag order—for want of a better term:

In 2010, it was reported that media coverage of climate change had been reduced by 80 per cent....

Environment Canada will also hide information, such as statistics on climate change, in the depths of their website;...

Environment Canada's goal is to frustrate journalists to the point where they give up and abandon the story.

I would like to ask the hon. member whether that is consistent with his experience.

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Blanchette:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

In my speech I praised the transfer of knowledge and the dissemination of knowledge. I do not have direct experience in the specific area that the member mentioned. However, it is important to establish and retain a philosophy concerning science and its use, both within and outside the public service.

Today, as we know, the use of knowledge and innovation are fundamental elements of change. However, these statements are based on certain elements. We must develop new knowledge, and that is why basic and applied research in universities, for example, is important for future development efforts in Canada.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak to a motion that one would have thought the government would be very open to supporting.

*Business of Supply*

I will start off by reading the motion. I have heard Conservative members stand up, one after the other, and support the continuation of muzzling Canada's scientists. What I would like members to reflect on, as they are going to vote, is what they are actually voting on. Maybe a few Conservatives will reconsider their vote.

The motion states:

That, in the opinion of the House: (a) the government has constrained the ability of federal scientists to share their research and to collaborate with their peers; (b)—

**Hon. Gary Goodyear:** But they have not.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, but they have. On that particular point, having had a member heckle, "Oh, but they have not", I would encourage members of the Conservative caucus to think outside of the box. Particularly, think outside of the Prime Minister's Office box, because the information they are being fed from the Prime Minister's Office is not always accurate. I would suggest that it is more spin than accurate. It is not necessarily truthful, so they should think again about what is being proposed within the motion.

I will continue. It states:

(b) federal scientists have been muzzled and prevented from speaking to the media about their work; (c) research is paid for by taxpayers and must be done in the public interest in order to protect the environment and the health and safety of Canadians; and, therefore, (d) the government should immediately rescind all rules and regulations that muzzle government scientists, consolidate government-funded or -created science so that it is easily available to the public at large through a central portal, create a Chief Science Officer whose mandate would include ensuring that government science is freely available to those who are paying for it, namely, the public, and allow scientists to be able to speak freely on their work with limited and publicly stated exceptions.

What a wonderful motion. Yes, this is something that one would think is already happening, but it is not. It is about attitudes. It is about leadership. What sort of leadership do we get from the Prime Minister on this very important issue? We get very little.

Compare that to some of the things that we in the Liberal caucus have been saying throughout the day and previously on this very important issue. In fact, not that long ago, the leader of the Liberal Party brought in Bill C-613, regarding access to information. One of the core principles of that bill is that information is open by default, meaning that the government really needs to open its books and consider making information open by default. However, that has not been the case with this particular government.

There is a tangible demonstration that clearly shows the different styles of leadership from the leader of the Liberal Party and the leader of the Conservative Party. What does he have to fear?

My colleague from Guelph posed a question earlier today regarding the repercussions for those who dare go against or say something that is not consistent with the government. It is a significant cost. Let me go through some of the organizations or watchdogs whose staff have been fired, forced out, or publicly maligned, or who have resigned in protest. I must say that the list I have is somewhat dated. It could probably be updated with a number of others, but here is just a sample. This is the Prime Minister's style of leadership that we have witnessed.

●(1650)

At the Canadian Firearms Program, there was Chief Superintendent Marty Cheliak, who was the director general; at the Canadian Wheat Board, Adrian Measner was the president and CEO; at the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, Linda Keen was president; at Foreign Affairs, we had Richard Colvin, diplomat; the head of the Military Police Complaints Commission was Peter Tinsley; the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces was Yves Côté; the former parliamentary budget officer, Kevin Page, was dealing with funding cuts; at the RCMP complaints commission, Paul Kennedy was chair; at the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, also known as Rights and Democracy, Rémy Beauregard was president; at Statistics—

**Mr. David Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I know that you like to give lots of latitude, and all members here appreciate that, but if the hon. member is going to go through the entire list of all federal appointees and staff who have decided to retire or move on, I do not know how he will possibly get to the subject at hand, which is the great quality of science funding that the government has done.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** That is certainly not a point of order. As the member points out, the Chair does give significant latitude to members to speak to what is before the House. With that, I give the floor back to the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate that members on the other side would be somewhat sensitive, even surprised in terms of the length of the list. Given that I have a limited amount of time, I appreciate the advice and maybe I should move on. However, members should keep in mind that this is all about the muzzling that takes place within the current government.

It is a long list, and somewhat of a dated list, but I applaud the member for standing up to point out that it is indeed a very long list. He should share with his caucus colleagues the profound impact that the Conservative government has had, in a negative way, on Canada's civil service and non-profit organizations in every region of our country by the message that it continues to send out. That message is primarily that if a person is not onside with the Government of Canada, the Conservatives do not want them to say anything and they should keep their mouth shut. That is the gag order, and we see that extensively.

My colleague, the mover of the motion, the member for Kingston and the Islands, put forward a wonderful question today in question period to the minister responsible for the Treasury Board. It was a straight-up question, and one would think he would have had a fairly simple answer, but he did not. It is amazing.

Here is the question that was posed by my colleague: "Mr. Speaker, PIPSC, the union representing government scientists, is asking for an unprecedented scientific integrity package in its collective bargaining agreement. Rather than asking for a raise, they are asking the government to unmuzzle science. They are explicitly seeking protection from "coercion to alter their data".

It has to be a first in Canada. We have scientists coming together, who are so concerned that this has to be a part of the negotiations. It has to be a first.

*Business of Supply*

My hon. colleague for Kingston and the Islands then said: “Canadians need to trust that government policies to keep us safe and healthy are based on objective evidence that has not been altered for partisan ends. Will the President of the Treasury Board agree to this no-cost ask in upcoming contract negotiations?”

I underline “no-cost” because I know Conservatives like to hear that. As some have implied through their heckles, one would think it would be a no-brainer and it would be a simple yes, but I invite members of the Conservative caucus to read *Hansard*. They might be a little disappointed in regard to the government's continual refusal to recognize the important role that Canada's scientists play, in many different ways.

I would like to give a very specific example that has had a profound impact, not only on my province but I would argue beyond Manitoba, in fact on all of Canada. If we listen to what some of the international scientists were saying, the impact has been felt around the world.

Canada has a great deal of fresh water. We are one of the countries that has been truly blessed with the amount of fresh water we have as a natural resource. When we think of the future and future generations, we in the Liberal Party do not believe that our grandchildren should have to deal with the problems. Where we can deal with the problems today, we should do that and show leadership.

The example I will give is the Experimental Lakes Area project. At a relatively small cost, into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, we had a wonderful facility. We still do, but not because of the Conservative government. This wonderful facility was providing world-class research on fresh waters and so much more.

• (1655)

The Government of Canada in its wisdom, or lack thereof, made the decision that it is no longer going to fund the Environmental Lakes Area. It was prepared to ultimately see it completely disappear. Quite frankly, if it were not for the Wynne government in Ontario, I suspect that it might not be there. It took another provincial government to come in and support this project.

I had the opportunity to talk with many people in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and other places, with respect to this issue. I brought forward petitions to the government.

The government will spend \$750 million on government advertising. I do not recall one ad from that \$750 million worth of advertising saying that the government is going to stop the funding of a few hundred thousand dollars to the environmental lakes in Manitoba and Ontario. That is very important research that was being done there. There was not a word.

It became the role of the scientists to raise the concerns and the protests to ensure that everyone was aware of what the Government of Canada was doing.

One would think that when Canadians started to react, the government would have at least been more sympathetic to the needs of the research facility and how the world benefited by the research taking place there. One would think that would have been an

absolute given. It was not with this government, and not under this current leadership. That is unfortunate.

I think if we were to canvass the Liberal caucus member by member, they would be able to come up with examples in virtually every region of our country where the government has not been proactive in promoting and encouraging research. It is research and development and science that has so much potential in terms of creating jobs, improving our environment, health care. There is so much that can be done, yet we have a government that has turned a deaf ear to the situation and the needs of that particular community. It has happened at a very significant cost.

One of the earlier speakers talked about Canada's GDP and the impact it has on GDP. That is true. Compare the amount of research that we do today to what we have done on a per capita basis in other countries around the world. We often make reference to the OECD. At one time, and we have to go back to the Chrétien era, we would have been virtually the first of the OECD. Today we do not even rank within the OECD. We have dropped that far behind. One would think that the government would recognize that it has dropped the ball.

It is more than just economics, even though the economics would be nice. These are all good quality jobs, and the potential spinoffs are phenomenal.

If the government only recognized that there is a moral responsibility to encourage that research, to financially support it, what would actually happen?

I made a quick note of a number of points. I suspect we could use even more scientists at work in terms of developing research papers. Think of the issue of climate change. When we think of climate change, one of the things that comes to mind for many Manitobans is the issue of flooding. Flooding is a very serious issue in Manitoba, and it always has been, especially in the last decade.

• (1700)

I was a member of the Manitoba legislature when we had the big flood of 1997. Over five decades ago, it was the Progressive Conservatives who brought in what we called Duff's Ditch, which circles half of Winnipeg, to divert water. Flooding is a very serious issue, but it is not only in Manitoba. We have seen flooding occur in all provinces in one form or another. Natural disasters have occurred.

Only the government believes that there is no such thing as climate change. Climate change is real. It is there. Scientists will tell us that. The government does not like scientists telling us that. It does not want to know the facts on the issue, and one has to wonder why.

We talk about the issue of overfishing. Whether it is in the Atlantic, the Pacific, Churchill, and even our inland freshwater deposits in Canada, we all have a vested interest in ensuring that fish are going to be there for future generations. I will sidestep a swipe at the Minister of Finance's comment in regard to letting grandchildren deal with it.

*Business of Supply*

We can deal with those issues. How do we deal with those issues? We rely on our scientists. Canada has some of the best, I would argue. I am a little biased, but we have the best scientists in the world. We should be very proud of the work they are doing. Not only should we be encouraging it, I would suggest we should be allowing them to talk about it. They should be able to talk with the media. They should be able to share among their peers. That is how they develop their ideas and bring it to the next level.

There is so much we could talk about in regard to the motion. Think of prescription drugs, health care, many different issues that are vitally important to our social fabric and lifestyle. Think of the economics and the leadership that Canada could play if it had a government that understood the benefits of taking off the muzzle and allowing our scientists to speak the truth on facts. What is there to hide?

Take the leader of the Liberal Party's ideas, as I pointed out with Bill C-613, and make it the default. Allow scientists in Canada to be heard, and maybe we will get more of our scientists wanting to stay in Canada. We know they have a passion for Canada and they want to be here, but they want their ideas to be heard and expanded upon.

• (1705)

**Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to sidetrack a bit. I see my colleagues from Kingston and the Islands and from Guelph, whom I know are not running again, and I want to say that it has been great working with them. I see them in the shot there, and it looks great.

As for the member for Winnipeg North, my goodness, what a short memory that gentleman has. I know we are doing research and all kinds of things to do with memory, but it was in the late nineties when the nation faced not even half of the economic crisis that we have faced recently. The Liberals cut funding to science and technology by over 9%, which created what the whole world remembers as the national brain drain.

It was the Liberals who chased the pharmaceutical giants out of this country with their enormous tax policies on corporations. Now we do not have anything happening in this country except maybe the manufacturing of vaccinations. However, the member has his own selective memory.

The member mentioned the idea of open access to federal research. The government has already done this. He already knows about the science, technology and innovation strategy and the open government strategies that have committed to making research available online. I am happy to know that the member obviously supports this government's policy when it comes to open access. Will he now confirm that we are doing something right?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, if I truly believed the government was doing something right, I would say so, but it is not.

Let me address the points. The member said that there were some cuts during the 1990s. In fairness, the member is right. Liberals did not cut as much as the Reform Party wanted us to cut, but there were some cuts. The Liberals not only fully reinstated, but went far beyond that.

It is important for us to note that under the Liberal administration, during union negotiations, scientists never went to the table asking to be allowed to be able to speak the truth, to be allowed the freedom to share their ideas. That is why scientists from Canada came to the Hill. This is what the government needs to recognize.

• (1710)

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have actually learned from the Liberals with respect to cuts. When the Liberals were in power, they cut the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, which funds universities' research, by 14%, they cut university science research by 25%, they cut Canada's scholarship program for science and engineering to the tune of \$23.1 million, and there is more. Obviously, the Conservatives have actually taken a page out of the Liberal book.

My colleague can maybe speak about the international reputation and how this muzzling of scientists impacts our reputation internationally. Is he in agreement that the government is really trying to hide stuff? It is just like the long form census, where what people do not know they do not have to react to. I am wondering if he can elaborate on that.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats have chosen to be somewhat critical of previous Liberal administrations. I do not buy the numbers that they have been throwing around today. The member is trying to pass blame on the Liberals or trying to include them, and I think it is somewhat shameful.

If I wanted to be political, it was not the NDP provincial government that went to the table to protect and guarantee the Environmental Lakes Area. It happened to be the Province of Ontario, the province next door. Why did the NDP government not stand up for the Experimental Lakes Area is the question I would pose. New Democrats cannot take the high road on this particular issue.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my friend from Winnipeg mentioned a number of people who were let go, fired, tossed aside by the government because their opinions conflicted somewhat with the government. I want to mention some organizations for my friend from Winnipeg and ask him if he agrees that this goes beyond the paranoia of the government. This goes to pointing out that the government not only does not want to be informed but does not want Canadians to know.

The news is that the Conservatives are wrong. They can smile like Cheshire cats thinking they have gotten away with it, but Canadians know. Canadians are not stupid. They know what is going on.

The Conservatives got rid of the Climate Action Network, the Child Care Advocacy Association, the Canada Volunteerism Initiative, the Canadian Council on Learning, the Alberta Network of Immigrant Women, the Law Reform Commission of Canada, because the Conservatives do not want them to be informed, the National Association for Women and the Law, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. Do members remember KAIROS, a group of Christian organizations uplifting people in third world countries? It made the mistake of mentioning climate change and Bev Oda, despite her department saying it should be funded, said no.

I am wondering what my friend has to say about all those organizations, dozens of them, that have lost their funding.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, turning down grants and saying no to grants for non-profit groups and others is a backdoor way of shutting down scientists from sharing their ideas with the world. The government needs to change its attitude, embrace scientists, be proud of them and allow them to be heard. That is the way Canada can move forward on research and science.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

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

• (1755)

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

*(Division No. 407)*

**YEAS**

Members

Allen (Welland)  
Angus  
Atamanenko  
Ayala  
Bennett  
Bevington  
Blanchette-Lamothe  
Borg  
Brahmi  
Brosseau

Andrews  
Ashton  
Aubin  
Bélangier  
Benskin  
Blanchette  
Boivin  
Boutin-Sweet  
Brisson  
Byrne

Caron  
Charlton  
Chisholm  
Christopherson  
Côté  
Cullen  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
Day  
Dion  
Doré Lefebvre  
Dubourg  
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
Easter  
Foote  
Freeland  
Fry  
Garrison  
Genest-Jourdain  
Goodale  
Groguhé  
Hsu  
Hyer  
Julian  
Lapointe  
Laverdière  
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)  
Liu  
Marston  
Masse  
May  
McGuinty  
Michaud  
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)  
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)  
Mourani  
Murray  
Nash  
Papillon  
Perreault  
Plamondon  
Rankin  
Raynault  
Saganash  
Scarpaleggia  
Sellah  
Sims (Newton—North Delta)  
Stewart  
Toone  
Trudeau  
Vaughan— 119

*Business of Supply*

Casey  
Chicoine  
Choquette  
Cleary  
Crowder  
Cuzner  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Dewar  
Dionne Labelle  
Dubé  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Dusseau  
Eyking  
Fortin  
Freeman  
Garneau  
Genest  
Giguère  
Gravelle  
Harris (St. John's East)  
Hughes  
Jones  
Lamoureux  
Latendresse  
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)  
Leslie  
MacAulay  
Martin  
Mathysen  
McCallum  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)  
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)  
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)  
Mulcair  
Nantel  
Nunez-Melo  
Péclet  
Pilon  
Quach  
Rathgeber  
Regan  
Sandhu  
Scott  
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-  
sor)  
St-Denis  
Sullivan  
Tremblay  
Valeriotte

**NAYS**

Members

Adler  
Albas  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambler  
Anders  
Armstrong  
Aspin  
Bateman  
Bergen  
Block  
Braid  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Butt  
Calkins  
Carmichael  
Chisu  
Clarke  
Crockatt  
Davidson  
Devolin  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Eglinski  
Fantino  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Galipeau  
Gill  
Goguen  
Goodyear

Ablonczy  
Aglukkaq  
Albrecht  
Allison  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Ashfield  
Barlow  
Benoit  
Blaney  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Daniel  
Dechert  
Dreeschen  
Dykstra  
Falk  
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
Fletcher  
Gallant  
Glover  
Goldring

*Private Members' Business*

Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lebel
Leef	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Perkins	Poilevre
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Yurdiga
Zimmer — 145	

PAIRED

Nil

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion defeated.

It being 5:57 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### FIREARMS REGULATIONS

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House: (a) Canada already exceeds all the standards listed in United Nations resolution 55/255 concerning firearms (the resolution); (b) the regulations envisioned in the resolution would do nothing to enhance public safety, and would serve only to burden the law-abiding firearms community; and therefore, the government has already surpassed its obligations with respect to the resolution and is not required to take any further steps.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to speak to the motion that I have introduced in the House. Some may wonder what United Nations resolution 55/255 does and how it impacts on law-abiding Canadian firearms owners. The basics of the resolution is the criminalization of the trafficking of firearms, the establishment of a

framework for marking firearms, the criminalization of the altering of those markings, and the registration of all firearms and all ammunition.

Canada has measures in place to protect public safety that are far superior to this. The difference is we operate with good old-fashioned Canadian common sense. Trafficking firearms is subject to a three-year mandatory prison sentence for a first offence under section 99 of the Criminal Code. Altering the serial number of a firearm is punishable by up to five years in prison, as per section 108 of the Criminal Code. We saw how the wasteful and ineffective the long gun registry did nothing to stop crime.

We have our own Canadian approach where law-abiding gun owners must adhere to a very strong set of rules, and it is working. According to Statistics Canada, the firearms homicide rate in Canada is at its lowest point in nearly 50 years. There has been a 30% decline in the rate of handgun homicides since 2008.

Our Conservative government is committed to protecting Canadians. At the same time, we are committed to standing up for law-abiding hunters, farmers and sport shooters.

I firmly believe the UN has no business dictating that Canadians once again be subjected to what can only be described as a backdoor registry. Our government kept its 17-year-old promise and ended the last wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

My intention in tabling this motion is to ensure that any door that could reopen the long gun registry remains firmly closed.

Darryl Kroeker, head of conservation programs for Ducks Unlimited Canada's B.C. Peace Region, where I am from, wrote to me following the tabling of my motion. He said, "The Conservative government has successfully eliminated the long gun registry, saving millions of tax payer dollars, and the UN resolution would be a step backwards, imposing additional costs and documentation on taxpayers' shoulders." I could not agree more.

That brings me to the provision in this UN resolution regarding firearms and markings.

This resolution proposes that all firearms made or imported into Canada be marked with a specific code identifying Canada, the year of manufacture, the year of import, the name of the manufacturer, the serial number, as well as other details about the firearm. This goes well above and beyond the standard practice of the firearms manufacturing industry and would impose a prohibitive cost on importers. As we all know, that cost would be passed on to our consumers seeking to legally purchase firearms. Some estimates that I have heard are as much as \$200 per firearm, and would possibly limit firearms of a certain brand coming into our country. I cannot see the public safety value in adding all of these markings.

Liberals lauded this resolution when they were in government, when they brought forward regulations to give it teeth. They said that this resolution somehow would improve the ability of law enforcement to trace firearms. I disagree.

*Private Members' Business*

I have discussed this issue with front-line law enforcement officers, and they consistently tell me that the only necessary piece of information for effective firearms tracing is a serial number. Therefore, I cannot see how any of these firearms marking regulations as drafted by the previous Liberal government are at all necessary.

I would encourage the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to repeal the needless portions of those regulations and only keep the serial number.

I am hopeful that this will happen in the near future, because our Conservative government has consistently taken action to stand up for law-abiding hunters, farmers and sport shooters.

As I have said before, we ended the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. We repealed the needless Liberal gun show regulations. We have brought forward the common sense firearms licensing act to get rid of the paperwork around authorizations to transport, limit the arbitrary powers of the CFO, and to restore the Swiss Arms family of firearms and the CZ858 to their non-restricted classification.

• (1800)

We are clearly the only party that will stand up for the rights of law-abiding firearms owners.

At its core, the motion before us today is about Canadian outdoors culture, whether it is hunting, target shooting, skeet shooting, cowboy shooting, three-gun competitions or any other activity with firearms. These are enjoyable activities that bind us together as a proud part of our shared Canadian heritage. Over two million Canadians participate in these activities. I and my family members are among them. However, it seems that the NDP and the Liberals continue to believe these activities are not Canadian.

I will quote Greg Farrant, of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, who said before the public safety committee:

Firearms owners in Canada are judges, lawyers, farmers, electricians, mechanics, plumbers, accountants, even federal politicians [who] live in and represent urban ridings. They are not criminals. They are not gang members. Rather, they are lawful firearms owners who obey the law.

However, it is clear that the message has not sunk in across the aisle. Some members of the Liberal Party and the NDP have taken the debate on firearms issues as an opportunity to engage in a drive-by smear of outdoor enthusiasts by saying that those who want to obey clear rules are part of the American-style gun lobby or are advocating for a return to, as one NDP member from Quebec said, “wild west” gun laws. That is patently ridiculous and it is offensive to the millions of law-abiding Canadian gun owners.

It is clear that this UN resolution, and any subsequent regulations drafted to enforce it, is only designed to take guns out of the hands of law-abiding Canadians. That is why I encourage the government to repeal those regulations, and I encourage all members of the House to send a strong message to support my motion.

• (1805)

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for the member.

First, who signed the arms trade treaty and made us a part of it? I believe it was the Government of Canada, but I would ask the member to answer that.

He tries to leave the impression with the legitimate gun owners and the hunting community that this bill is more than it is. There are probably not too many places in the world where more personal guns are owned than in the United States. Could the member answer whether the United States has ratified this treaty to which he is so opposed? I believe it has.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, my bill speaks to having us not abide by this particular part of the treaty. That is why I brought forward the bill. Canada does not need any more regulations. We do not need a backdoor registry, such as the one that this would create, not to mention the cost added to the firearms themselves, which would be passed on to legal firearms owners in Canada.

The bottom line is that my bill says that we do not need to do this. I hope everybody across the way will support me in this.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I always find it kind of a shame when they draw the line between black and white. They say that people on this side of House believe one thing and those on the other believe another. Thankfully, Canada is known for its low crime rate; that is what sets us apart from the United States. We would like the crime rate to be even lower. The low rate is due to the fact that Canada has regulations to protect people from firearms.

People have to have a licence to drive and, as my colleague pointed out, to have a dog or a cat. That is why I do not understand the Conservatives' refusal to maintain Canada's exemplary record on protecting its citizens and keeping them safe. I do not understand why they do not want adequate gun control.

Why not implement the United Nations regulations? I do not understand their obsession. Maybe my colleague can explain their obsession with not wanting adequate gun control considering that most firearm owners agree with implementing these regulations.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the statement made by the member across the way. However, I do not know if she heard what I said about my bill. The fact is that we in Canada already think we have sufficient regulation, not just sufficient but exemplary standards in regulations to govern firearms ownership in Canada, and that we do not need further moves to accept the UN arms treaty proposal. She said it for us. We already have exemplary rules, and why should we follow another set of rules, and why should we recreate another gun registry in Canada? I think Canadians are behind us. They were behind us in getting rid of the original registry, and I am sure those same folks do not want to see another registry come in through the back door.

*Private Members' Business*

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives keep talking about combatting terrorism, combatting violence, and combatting civil war, except that when it comes time to get to work, substantive work to prevent terrorism, violence and civil war, they do not answer the call. We get the impression that they are not prepared to make a serious effort. When we talk about victims of crime, it never seems like this a problem to them. It does not bother them that these things happen. Then, they are keen to punish and provide a military response to what is happening. However, the very idea of trying to prevent crime, violence, terrorism and other things, is really not part of their vocabulary. The idea of working and dealing with the root of the problem is not part of their approach. When we talk about violence, international piracy, terrorism and civil war, weapons are one of the sources, in fact one of the essential aspects, of these phenomena. The availability of weapons, often obtained illegally, fuels these conflicts and gives more financial resources to unsavoury groups.

To that end, I would like to read an excerpt from a report by the group Small Arms Survey, which I have been following for years and does extraordinary work:

The illicit trade [and “illicit” is the operative word, since the members opposite do not seem to understand that we are talking about illicit trade] in small arms and light weapons occurs in all parts of the globe but is concentrated in areas afflicted by armed conflict, violence, and organized crime, where the demand for illicit weapons is often highest. Arms trafficking fuels civil wars and regional conflicts; stocks the arsenals of terrorists, drug cartels, and other armed groups; and contributes to violent crime and the proliferation of sensitive technology.

Every year, this illicit weapons trade causes tens of thousands of deaths. It also creates enormous instability in many countries, which impedes social and economic development. This phenomenon often leads to other indirect deaths, as well as serious development problems.

As I was saying, this trafficking helps reprehensible people, including terrorist organizations, to raise money. That is why the international community adopted the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The goal is to put an end to this illegal trafficking. We know that this was adopted under UN Resolution 55/255 in 2001. Canada signed it, but did not ratify it, even though at the time Canada was a leader in negotiating those kinds of agreements. Canada was really a beacon. We were a model. Since then, the government has continued to postpone ratifying that protocol. Now we see that it wants to put it off indefinitely, with a motion that, we must admit, is a little hard to understand.

• (1815)

First of all, this motion tells us that Canada already exceeds the firearms standards listed in resolution 55/255. Thus, if this is not a problem, why not join all the other countries, including some of our important partners such as the European Union, and simply ratify it? Why not do this in good faith to show that we care about this issue and are prepared to fight the illicit trafficking of firearms?

The resolution also mentions the burden this could represent for law-abiding firearms owners. If they are law-abiding, it is not a burden. It just means that firearms will be marked when sold or when they cross the border. The RCMP has been teaching other countries how to do this properly for years. We are quite capable of doing this. It really is not a burden for Canada.

This is typical of the Conservatives. As in the case of the small arms treaty, they are trying to make us believe that this will affect Canadian duck hunters, for example, even though this is not at all the case. This has to do with the international firearms trade.

The Conservatives are turning a blind eye and are trying to score political points with proposals and positions that completely distort the purpose of international tools that are absolutely essential. If Canada is truly interested in world peace—and I hope so—it should participate in this type of effort.

In closing, we should note that we would not be doing this just for those countries plagued by civil war, piracy—Somalia, for example—or terrorism, but also because it affects us indirectly in Canada.

In 2001, when the resolution was passed, the Canadian representative said something very relevant, and I quote:

In Canada, we know that globalization is contributing to the ever increasing sophistication of international firearm smuggling rings. Illicit transfers of firearms are often carried out through organized criminal channels and, in turn, move into the civilian markets through these transnational networks. We agree with respect to the resulting harm it poses to the public health and safety of our citizens.

Canada views the Firearms Protocol as a seminal instrument in our collective fight against this phenomenon. Canada should therefore ratify this protocol.

[*English*]

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the bill. I want to make clear at the beginning—because there is always the attempt by the government side to use gun control as a wedge issue—that the Liberal Party would not bring back the gun registry and the United Nations resolution does not bring a registry in the back door.

Can we imagine the uproar in the United States if it did bring a registry in the back door? The United States has ratified this agreement.

The argument put forward by the member moving the motion, according to a March 30 press release, was that the UN treaty attempting to address the illicit trade in firearms should be rejected is the price of placing a stamp reading “Canada” or “CA” on any exported firearm from Canada.

In that press release, the member confirms that firearms already bear permanently marked serial numbers or identification numbers, which means the stamping process is currently in place and in some cases they do need to add an additional stamp.

It should be of concern to Canadians that, while this country votes in support of the Arms Trade Treaty, it now stands with Iran, Syria, North Korea, Russia, and China in its refusal to sign, let alone ratify, the treaty.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** The U.S. has not ratified it.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** No, Mr. Speaker, not the U.S.; the U.S. has already signed.

*Private Members' Business*

With the signing of the agreement by the United States in 2013, Canada is now the only NATO country that has not signed the treaty. Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and now the United States all support it. Canada must join the community of nations, specifically our key allies, in supporting this effort to reduce the illegal small arms trade. To do otherwise would only serve the illegitimate purpose of those forces that seek to undermine public safety and national security.

The UN firearms protocol has been described as working to achieve the following:

The objective of the Firearms Protocol, which is the first legally binding instrument on small arms adopted at the global level, is to promote, facilitate and strengthen cooperation among States in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.

Why would the Conservative Party oppose that? We all know that a backbench member's motion obviously has the support of the PMO before it gets here. Is it not the Conservative government's claim to be for law and order? Have we not heard a lot of debate in this House from the Prime Minister about his concern for terrorism and to be tough on terrorists? What weapons does he think terrorists use if they are to get hold of weapons and kill people, either here, South Africa, Syria, or Iran?

That is what this UN resolution is trying to prevent, the illicit use of firearms around the world for any illegal purpose. This is a government that claims to be for law and order, claims to be tough on terrorists; and with this motion, if the Conservatives support it, they are doing the direct opposite at the global level.

In order to implement the UN firearms protocol, contracting parties need to adopt three sets of provisions in their domestic legal system: one, illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts, components and ammunition must be categorized as criminal offences; second, a system of government authorization of licences to ensure legitimate manufacturing and international movement of firearms should be established; third and finally, adequate marking and recording regimes for the purpose of effective international co-operation and tracing of firearms should be implemented.

● (1820)

Those are the three things that need to be done by a country.

The text of the firearms protocol was adopted in UN Resolution 55/255. It was opened for signature by the United Nations member states in 2001. It is, therefore, a treaty that is legally binding upon those states that ratify it.

Would it impact law-abiding gun owners? No, it would not impact law-abiding gun owners.

Canada signed the firearms protocol in 2002 but has not ratified it. This means that Canada is not legally bound by the treaty's provisions, but has committed not to undermine the treaty's object and purpose which comes about as a result of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, article 18.

However, progress in implementing the protocol in Canadian law was slow and is still not complete. As per the protocol, a regulation requiring "Canada" or "CA" to be stamped or engraved into the frame or receiver of every locally produced or imported firearm, with

the date of import, if applicable, was made by the Governor in Council in 2004 but never brought into force. Its entering into force was deferred to 2006, then 2007, then 2009, then 2010, 2012 and, finally, 2013. It is now scheduled to enter into force on December 1, 2015. These deferrals were made for various reasons, and some of them quite legitimately.

In 2010, the entry into force was deferred to allow the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to experiment with adhesive markings, rather than engraved ones, at the request of the domestic firearms industry. I think that was a legitimate deferral. The adhesive markings were found to be inadequate.

In 2013, the entry into force was deferred based upon the need to consult with stakeholders to ensure the marking regulations would help police investigations without causing excessive difficulties to businesses and individuals. "Stakeholders", in this case, referred to law enforcement, the firearms industry, advocacy groups and firearms control officials.

As to the threat to domestic firearms owners, a submission to the foreign affairs committee, in July 2013, by the Canadian Control Arms Coalition stated the following:

There has been considerable speculation, and even misrepresentation on the part of some lobby groups, that the ATT would curtail legitimate gun ownership in Canada. This is not the case – there is absolutely nothing in the ATT that would prevent Canadians from legitimately owning firearms or that would change the obligations of current owners. Indeed, thanks to Canada's successful efforts, the treaty preamble insists that States Parties be "mindful of the legitimate trade and lawful ownership, and use of certain conventional arms for recreational, cultural, historical, and sporting activities, where such trade, ownership and use are permitted or protected by law....The treaty does apply to firearms and ammunition exported from or imported into Canada, but since Canada has export and import controls in place that generally meet the standards required by the treaty, treaty implementation by Canada should not have a noticeable impact on legitimate domestic firearms owners.

This preamble is contained in the text of the Final United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty of March 27, 2013.

Since that positive vote, Canada has neither signed nor ratified the treaty. Among those countries that have neither signed nor ratified the treaty are Russia, China, North Korea, Iran and Syria. They seem to be strange bedfellows for the Government of Canada that claims it is a law and order country.

● (1825)

To close, Canada remains on the sidelines as the UN Arms Trade Treaty comes into effect. Our reputation around the United Nations is already in tatters. This will give terrorists more legitimacy in terms of the movement of arms, and it further undermines our position at the United Nations.

**Mr. John Williamson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not believe the member is misleading the House, but his data is incorrect. The United States has not ratified this agreement. It has revoked that ratification, that signature.

● (1830)

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Yukon.

**Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate that while that might not have been a point of order, it was certainly a point worth raising.

*Private Members' Business*

I am pleased to stand to speak today about Motion No. 589. I would like to begin by commending the member for Prince George—Peace River for all of his work, particularly in support of the firearms community. I have had a lot of opportunity to work with him. Those of us on this side of the House who support the firearms community through the hunting and angling caucus and other direct initiatives all know that the member has a keen interest in outdoor pursuits, the shooting way of life. He is supportive of the firearms community and has done a lot of great work. It is certainly great to have him as a member of the caucus.

This important motion highlights the Conservative government's common sense firearms regime. The member for Prince George—Peace River is introducing the motion to ensure that no unnecessary steps are implemented. I have heard the Liberals and NDP today engage in a drive-by smear of outdoor enthusiasts by saying that those who want to obey clear rules are part of some sort of American-style gun lobby. In fact, I heard a member from the NDP question the Conservative government's obsession with firearms legislation.

It is interesting that while New Democrats refer to it as an obsession, I would refer to it as representation of the millions of Canadians who are lawful, legal, and ethical firearms owners. New Democrats can call that an obsession. I call it good parliamentary representation of the millions of Canadians across the country who engage in athletic hunting and trapping pursuits and firearms as a day-to-day tool, as a way of protecting and preserving a way of life.

They will not confuse this as any kind of bizarre obsession by the Conservative government. In fact, it is clear, unapologetic, and resounding support for a lawful, ethical, and indeed healthy way of life, exercised for a long period of time in the tradition and history of Canada.

Of course, these kinds of comments by both the NDP and the Liberal Party are ridiculous and offensive to the millions of Canadians who own firearms. This large group of Canadians pays attention to what goes on in this place, and I know they pay far closer attention than the members of the opposition realize or may think. I hope they keep that in mind when this important motion comes forward for a vote.

I would like to talk about something that I spoke a bit on yesterday in my speech on Bill C-42. There are a lot of linkages between our entire firearms policy and agenda to support these millions of Canadians. I will talk about a representative of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Greg Farrant, who said:

Firearms owners in Canada are judges, lawyers, farmers, electricians, mechanics, plumbers, accountants, even federal politicians...who live in and represent urban ridings. They are not criminals. They are not gang members. Rather, they are lawful firearms owners who obey the law.

Indeed, they are mothers, daughters, aunts, uncles, and children, including my son.

Judging by the comments we have heard today, it seems that the NDP and the Liberals in opposition continue to believe that only backwoods, unrefined, rural folk engage in these activities. Again, that is a complete abandonment of the facts in our country, and an insult to Canadians who pursue a way of life, whether it be in sport

shooting, collecting, athletics, or hunting and trapping, which is a long-standing heritage, as I have mentioned.

This motion is as much about our outdoor culture and preservation and protection of a way of life as it is about anything else. We have consistently been clear that we will do everything we can to ensure that red tape and unnecessary measures are not put in place to create a burden for the lawful, ethical, and law-abiding firearms owners, manufacturers, or ammunition producers in this country. I think that the member for Prince George—Peace River outlined clearly the reputation that our country already has and the laws that are already in place.

● (1835)

Opposition members say that they are already doing this, that it is lawful and why would we not just go along to get along again. The fact is, why would we put measures in place that duplicate the things we are already doing so well?

We have a regime that is Canadian made. We have a regime that meets the needs of Canada, a vast nation that spans from Newfoundland and Labrador all the way to the Yukon territory, some 7,000 kilometres from coast to coast to coast. It is the largest archipelago in the world, with remote rural Canadian locations, huge distribution networks, a vast array of needs and purposes for firearms ownership, firearms manufacturing and firearms shipment.

We need a Canadian made solution, and that is what we have in our country. Do we need the imposition of an international body and an international governance structure telling Canada how to go about administering our laws, our rules and our policies, given the very unique nature of the Canadian geography and the Canadian people?

We have heard examples from across the floor that the EU does this so why would we not do it. The EU is not Canada, not in this context. There are times when we look to other nations to model the things they do well and best practices. However, in this case, the submission from the member in his motion is that we cannot model that system now in our country under the conditions I have outlined, under the unique geographic differences, the differences of the Canadian people, the different needs for firearms in the Canadian context, the different utilizations, history and culture. Canada in that respect is different.

Nonetheless, we have a strong regime of which we can be proud. In fact, I would submit that the member in his motion would confer that Canada has a model that other countries could sufficiently replicate to maintain public safety, control, tracking and order.

*Private Members' Business*

I have spoken directly with manufacturers and shippers in our country and they tell me that the programs, the regulations and the inventory accountability they need to maintain is second to none. In fact, if members in the House were wanting to endeavour to really get the facts on that, all they would need to do is go to a shipping location in our country and ask how it accounts for the ammunition in its facilities and how it accounts for the shipping and movement of that ammunition in and out of its facility. They would find an incredible, intricate, regulated network of rules that absolutely guarantee preservation and protection of society, accountability, security and all the necessary measures that a reasonable Canadian would expect to be in place. I know that because I have been there. I have seen that. I have worked with and talked about these issues with the manufacturers.

Members in the opposition can pontificate about whether this would cause onerous measurements or standards or whether this would be a big deal or not. The simple fact is that they have not gone out and asked. They have not been there to find out.

I can say with absolute certainty that the kind of measures that are being proposed are not good in the Canadian context. They are not fitting in with that need and we do not need to import an international boondoggle. We need Canadian solutions, developed by and for Canadians. We need to be able to stand proud. We have heard that across both sides of the House. We need to be able to stand proud and defend the system that we have in place. Again, here would be clear and ample submission in the House of Commons that we can defend what we have in Canada in terms of our firearms licensing regime, policies, sale and distribution legislation, criminal sanctions and the measures that complete a well rounded policy.

Every time, whether it is this motion, the common sense firearms licensing act, Bill C-637, introduced by my friend and colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, chair of the hunting and angling caucus, or the elimination of the long gun registry, we continue to hear examples like “I register my dog. I register my cat. I register my car. Why is it a big deal?” However, those at the time were the seven myths of the opposition that they continue to talk about. They completely misunderstood the differences between those things.

• (1840)

They continued then and they continue today to use fearmongering tactics in an attempt to fundraise and in an attempt to scare Canadians. The Liberal Party has done it recently, showing pictures of scary guns that will now be available at shopping malls and easily stolen. They hope to scare Canadians into thinking that somehow any of the laws we are putting in place would make that easier. That is clearly not the case.

I will conclude by saying that I invite all members to explore this issue and consider their next steps as they move forward on this motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today, with all the strength of my convictions, to oppose this motion as firmly as I can, of course, and to share my thoughts on this motion with the people of Trois-Rivières, whom I have the pleasure of

representing. I am certain that a large majority of them support my position.

We are debating a very important issue, since it has a direct impact on public safety around the world and on peace in a number of countries facing instability. I am obviously referring to the illegal trafficking of firearms. I want to emphasize the words “trafficking” and “illegal”, and not “firearms”. That is often where the governing party likes to go, as though we were viscerally opposed to the fact that an individual can own a firearm. We are talking about the illegal trafficking of firearms.

I would like to remind everyone that on May 31, 2001, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution to create a protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms. At the time, the Government of Canada supported the UN initiative. Canada was proud of its decision to adopt that approach because the world was finally finding ways to co-operate in waging an effective battle against this international scourge. I would like to take 30 seconds to remind everyone of what Canada said at the time:

In Canada, we know that globalization is contributing to the ever increasing sophistication of international firearm smuggling rings. Illicit transfers of firearms are often carried out through organized criminal channels and, in turn, move into the civilian markets through these transnational networks. We agree with respect to the resulting harm it poses to the public health and safety of our citizens.

Canada views the Firearms Protocol as a seminal instrument in our collective fight against this phenomenon.

There is no denying that those years are well behind us, as is that approach to international issues, much to my chagrin. Today, the Conservative member for Prince George—Peace River moved a motion that would have the Canadian government turn its back on this UN initiative. The government keeps hammering home its messages about public safety, but this is clear proof that those messages about safety are nothing but smoke and mirrors.

I would like to talk about some of the negative consequences of the illicit trafficking of firearms. As members of the House know, the globalized world in which we live is a source of opportunity but also of threats. Although trade is one of the most positive manifestations of globalization—I could go on and on about all the benefits of globalization, but that is not the topic of debate tonight—unfortunately, criminal networks have also done well and are also internationalizing their activities. A lack of international co-operation bolsters the illicit movement of arms and strengthens international criminal groups. The primary victims of the illicit trafficking of firearms are the countries that have been devastated by years of civil war and the communities affected by urban violence. For example, the proliferation of small arms is just as big of a challenge for conflict zones as it is for peace zones. It is a real epidemic.

I would like to give some statistics to give members an idea of the magnitude of the problem. Every year in Brazil, over 30,000 people are murdered by light weapons. Every year in Colombia, the illicit trafficking of firearms results in the murder of over 20,000 people. In many countries, the rate of firearm-related death is higher than the death rates in official war zones. What is more, the Small Arms Survey estimates that 60% of small arms and light weapons in the world are owned by civilians.

*Private Members' Business*

The illicit trafficking of firearms, including small arms—I would like to remind members once again that we are talking about illicit manufacturing and trafficking—is constantly fuelling military conflicts.

• (1845)

It is true that military conflict can be caused by political, economic and social problems. However, the availability of small arms in an unstable environment only increases the probability of conflict and undermines all possibility of finding a resolution.

Of course that is one of the most obvious outcomes of the illicit trade in firearms. However, I would also like to point out some of the indirect consequences of this scourge. Instability associated with the proliferation of weapons has, in some cases, prevented humanitarian aid from reaching the people who need it.

The millions of deaths in the DRC have not all been the direct result of violence caused by light weapons. Some were caused by malnutrition and illness, which were more difficult to address because of the weapons trafficking. Insecurity related to conflict remains one of the biggest obstacles to human development.

Basically, violence caused by the presence of firearms seriously undermines reconstruction as well as investments once the conflict ends. The list of other disastrous consequences is still very long, but the illicit weapons trade is a scourge.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police is of the opinion that the United Nations protocol and the marking system it entails helps in cases where weapons are used in the commission of a crime. It also helps in detecting the trafficking, smuggling and stockpiling of firearms, and that applies directly here in Canada. We are not talking about an unknown or obscure international conflict, but events that can happen here at home.

I would like to draw the attention of the House to the current government's inaction when it comes to the illegal movement of firearms. Often the government, this government, is easily lulled to passivity by the economic benefits of the firearms trade and pressure from lobbyists.

Why does this government not want to ratify international regulations on the movement of firearms? Canada's poor performance in international relations is a whole other topic for discussion. What is more, everyone has noticed that this loss of credibility on the world stage coincides perfectly with the arrival of this government.

Once again, the Conservatives are playing petty politics while thousands of civilians are risking their lives in conflict zones. It is nothing less than outrageous for a government to engage in such cheap partisan manoeuvring instead of playing a constructive role on the world stage.

International co-operation is absolutely vital to effectively combat illicit trafficking in firearms. By refusing to ratify and enforce the firearms marking regulations, the Conservatives are once again showing their lack of consideration for the UN.

If I may, I would like to more clearly define the implications of this protocol and the type of marking it involves. The protocol includes a series of crime control measures and creates obligations to

establish as criminal offences—it seems to me that this should already be music to the Conservatives' ears—the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components, and ammunition. It also requires a licensing system for the import, export and transit of firearms, and contains provisions regulating the marking and tracing of firearms. By refusing to ratify the protocol, the Conservatives have shown a profound lack of respect for the UN.

I get the impression that our watches are running at different speeds because I never have enough time to finish my speech.

With regard to multilateralism, the Conservatives are going steadily downhill. They are isolating Canada when it comes to the regulation of the gun trade given that over 30 countries have already ratified the protocol in question. The European Union, India, Brazil, South Africa, Greece and Mexico have all signed and ratified this treaty. Where are we?

Once again, the answer is that the Government of Canada is absent, but what is even worse is that we are going to once again receive a lower ranking because of the Conservatives' categorical refusal to ratify this agreement.

• (1850)

A Conservative member even suggested that we simply withdraw from the UN. I thought he was joking but after seeing that Canada was the only country to withdraw from the Kyoto protocol, I think that, unfortunately, we have to take the Conservatives seriously.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today in support of Motion No. 589 regarding the firearms regime that the opposition is attempting to foist upon Canadians by the United Nations.

This motion is very important. It clearly lays out the case that Canada has a firearms control system superior to the one contemplated by the UN. Let me elaborate on precisely why that is.

The UN resolution calls for three main things.

First, it calls for a registry of all firearms. Canada has extensive experience with this social experiment. It cost billions of dollars and did not stop a single crime or save a single life. Unless the Liberals or NDP have a chance, this scheme will never again burden Canadian firearms owners. Let me say that we have a very sophisticated and effective handgun registry that is the model and envy of many nations.

The second provision is even more onerous. It calls for a registry of all ammunition. How exactly would this be achieved? Would every single piece of ammunition require a serial number? This is just more bureaucratic creep at its worst.

The third provision would establish a very specific and very onerous regime for the marking of all firearms manufactured in or imported into a signatory country.

Let me provide an example. Were this provision to be in force, all firearms imported into Canada this year would be required to be marked with an additional marking: CA-15. The members opposite seem to think that somehow this would be an enhanced tool for tracing. The only real tool police use when tracing firearms is a serial number, which tells law enforcement a lot. Country markings are patently useless, as statistics show that 96% of firearms crimes in Canada are committed with illegally imported firearms.

These are the facts. We are committed to safe and sensible firearms policies. If measures target criminals and make Canadians safer, then we will support them; if they do not, then we will abolish them.

As a case in point, we created tough new sentences for drive-by shootings. This is a good deterrent. It makes Canadians safer.

We are also in the process of strengthening firearms prohibition orders so that those individuals convicted of domestic violence cannot possess a firearm in a volatile situation. This makes Canadians safer.

We also ended the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry. This is sensible.

There have been comments from across the way suggesting that if our firearms regulations and legislation are even more effective than those of the UN, we should adopt the UN measures as well. My response is that adding laws for the sake of just adding them and adding bureaucratic red tape just means an extra burden on Canadians and more expense to government. Those dollars could easily go toward more effective law enforcement and toward reducing the importation of illegal firearms over the borders.

We are also eliminating useless red tape around authorizations to transport restricted and prohibited firearms. This paperwork is not even shared with police; it is simply filed in a bureaucrat's drawer. Ending this requirement is a very sensible act.

We are committed to a made-in-Canada approach. We will not cave in to foreign interests that want to craft Canada's firearms policies. In short, the regulations that give teeth to the resolution we are discussing here today are simply meant to discourage firearms ownership and to discourage hunting and sport shooting. These are Canadian heritage activities that we value and are part of what makes us Canadians. We want to encourage them.

That is why I will be supporting this motion. I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion moved by my colleague from Prince George—Peace River. We have good reason to be skeptical when we read my colleague's motion:

...(a) Canada already exceeds all the standards listed in United Nations resolution 55/255 concerning firearms (the resolution); (b) the regulations envisioned in the resolution would do nothing to enhance public safety, and would serve only to burden the law-abiding firearms community; and therefore, the government has already surpassed its obligations with respect to the resolution and is not required to take any further steps.

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

Canada signed this famous convention but it unfortunately did not ratify it. Even if we assume that Canada complies with and even exceeds these famous standards, they still only apply to Canada itself. This does not include working or co-operating with other parties in the world that are struggling with the trafficking in illegal firearms.

Instead of lending a hand to our friends abroad, we are slamming the door in their face, telling ourselves that at least the threat is not in our home. That attitude is disappointing, but it is sadly nothing new from this government.

**The Speaker:** 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.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

### INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening in adjournment proceedings to review and hopefully to find answers to a question that I initially put forward on April 23. It relates to funding in our overseas development assistance budgets.

In past years, and for many years until recently, when a member of Parliament or any member of the public opened the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance, they could find tables in the back that showed funding in each department of Canada, and previous years could be compared to this year.

In the last number of years, these budgetary tables have not been included in the budget. People have to wait for the main estimates and supplementary estimates.

I was struck, in reading the budget, that although we had heard many commitments in debate on extending the mission of bombing Iraq into bombing Syria, we had heard commitments over and over again in this place. Members will recall that this was not merely a military mission. This was largely a humanitarian mission. Canada was deeply committed to humanitarian assistance in the region.

On April 23, I put this to the minister. I was astonished to find that while in the budget there is \$360 million earmarked for military purposes in Iraq and Syria, there is no mention at all of humanitarian assistance in that region. Moreover, there is no reference in the budget to any overseas development assistance spending. There is no budget for what used to be called CIDA, which has now been folded into something that is referred to around Ottawa as DFATD, the combined departments of foreign affairs and overseas development assistance.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

We do know that two years ago the budget for international development in this country was slashed by \$670 million, and it does appear on further inquiries that there is a freeze on overseas development assistance spending. I find it troubling that in the federal budget there was nothing mentioned for humanitarian assistance.

Now, the response I received was from the hon. Minister of International Development who said that the humanitarian assistance had increased in the Middle East. However, again the basic questions are as follows: What are we spending on development assistance? What is the total amount? How are we accommodating the various humanitarian crises?

Right now we have millions of refugees from Syria who are in Lebanon, in Turkey, and in Jordan. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has made a very clear statement that there is a total lack of resources. There is not sufficient funding coming from the global community to assist the humanitarian crisis in the region.

I would like to pursue that tonight in adjournment proceedings. I am hoping to find a response from the Conservative member as to the following: How much money are we spending on development assistance in total? How are we going to accommodate the various humanitarian crises? What will we spend on Iraq and Syria?

In the minute remaining, if I may, I recently learned that the government is preparing to do something that will be a massive waste of money: moving 3,000 civil servants in this city between Gatineau and downtown Ottawa. It will be moving 3,000 people from what used to be CIDA into different accommodations. The costs of this are astonishing. We have the personnel, the new offices, the packing up of file cabinets and computers and phone lines. It is an absurd thing to do by a government that claims to be fiscally responsible.

It is particularly absurd, and also disrespectful to the challenge of alleviating poverty globally, to spend money on moving civil servants around within Ottawa when the real crisis of mobility is the refugees, the Syrian refugees who are trying to get out of Syria and who are also stuck in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan without adequate assistance.

● (1900)

**Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for her question tonight during adjournment proceedings.

From the beginning, Canada has been at the forefront of international response to help the people of Syria and to help the people of Iraq. Most recently, in May, the Prime Minister announced additional Canadian humanitarian assistance funding for both Syria and Iraq, whose people continue to suffer from the ongoing conflict.

Millions inside Syria now require assistance. Millions more have fled to Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, not knowing if they will ever be able to return to their homes. Compounding this problem even further, terrorist groups such as the so-called Islamic State have flourished in such an environment, expanding and threatening stability of the entire region.

These situations represent some of the most difficult and complex humanitarian crises ever faced by the international humanitarian community. Canada has been among the top donors to respond to the United Nations' call to step up humanitarian efforts in both contexts. The top priorities are protection for civilians, including from sexual and gender-based violence, and shelter, food, and access to health care and basic humanitarian services.

Already in 2015, Canada has allocated \$80 million in humanitarian assistance funding in response to the crisis in Iraq. Since the beginning of 2014, we have committed \$107.4 million to respond to the needs of Iraqis affected by the violence, and this makes Canada the fifth largest humanitarian donor to this crisis—the fifth largest, from a country with a small population like Canada's.

Specific to Syria, as of May 2015, Canada is the sixth largest single country donor to the humanitarian response. Since the onset of the crisis, Canada has allocated over \$503 million in support of the humanitarian response, with the most recent funding announced earlier this month by the Prime Minister himself.

It is concerning that opposition MPs fail to acknowledge the real threat posed by ISIS and jihadi terrorism to our country and our country domestically. We take this very seriously.

The military measures we are taking against ISIL do not in any way preclude humanitarian actions. There is no either/or. There is support for both. We will combat ISIS militarily, and we will support the victims of ISIS in a humanitarian way.

Canada has been at the forefront of the international response to the crisis in Iraq, as well as Syria and the surrounding area, since the beginning of each crisis. We will remain at the forefront.

In conclusion, we have helped nearly two million people, provided shelter and relief supplies to more than one million people, and helped to educate more than half a million children.

In Syria, Canada's support has meant 16 million people have access to safe drinking water, 4.1 million Syrians have access to food assistance, and emergency assistance is provided to nearly three million refugees in neighbouring countries.

We are getting the job done when it comes to humanitarian assistance during this crisis in the Middle East.

● (1905)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, again, we have heard this before. I am certainly gratified to know some dollar amounts, but I do not think it is unreasonable that a parliamentarian and every MP in the House should be able to see the budget for overseas development assistance as a whole.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

I am still troubled that while this budget mentions specific amounts for military assistance, it is the budget that fails to mention humanitarian assistance; it is not opposition members who are unwilling to give credit if the government is going to put money into humanitarian assistance. However, it is reasonable, since the fundamental principle is that Parliament controls the public purse, that a document that is ostensibly the budget—not really a budget, as it does not give us the numbers—should be able to tell us how much money in total we are putting to overseas development assistance and what portion of that is going to the humanitarian crisis in Syria and Iraq.

I agree that it is not either/or, but it is not unreasonable to ask how much the total budget is for overseas development assistance.

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** Mr. Speaker, the estimates contain all of government spending. All one has to do is check the estimates to see how much money the government is spending. Budget 2015 reaffirms our government's commitment to helping people who live in poverty and responding to humanitarian crises, and this response has been strong.

Our main estimates clearly show the blueprint for the department's annual planned spending. It is right there. Humanitarian assistance has increased 62% this year over the year before, and since 2003 we have nearly doubled the amount of aid to low-income countries over the previous Liberal government.

We are pleased that economic action plan 2015 announces the government's intent to leverage development-focused private investments through a development finance initiative. This will enhance Canada's ability to advance its international assistance objectives by partnering with the private sector to address critical financing gaps in developing countries.

The estimates show all of this clearly. Our Conservative government is reducing taxes on the middle class while delivering aid in a way that is accountable to Canadians and effective for those in need.

[*Translation*]

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, this morning I was speaking with a woman from my riding of Montcalm, Ms. Francoeur, of the Résidence coopérative Quatre-Soleils in Saint-Lin-Laurentides. She was very pleased to have finally received funding from the Government of Canada for accommodations at her centre.

I would like to recognize the efforts that are made every year in Quebec and Canada to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities. The resources invested mean a great deal to people living with physical limitations. The government plays a key role, but there is so much work still to be done before we can talk about a truly inclusive society.

These resources, as much as they are appreciated, are certainly very modest. Investing in the integration of people with disabilities and in accessibility is something that goes far beyond compassionate or altruistic considerations. To put it simply, such investments are good social decisions and actions that demonstrate the goodwill behind the government's public policies.

I have said it before and I will say it again: an investment in people with disabilities is, above all, an investment that is good for everyone and one that contributes directly to our communities.

Had we gotten into the habit of handling funding requests for projects that meet the needs of people with disabilities the same way we handle economic requests, we might have much more effective practices for those people now.

People with disabilities are people first, and each step toward social inclusion is a sure way to help all of them and all affected families thrive.

I deplore the lack of stable programs and the dearth of information about their recurrence. The government has to be consistent and offer more independence to people with disabilities and greater social cohesiveness for all.

The enabling accessibility fund accepts applications at much too unpredictable intervals, making it impossible for organizations to prepare applications in advance for specific projects.

When an organization that helps people with disabilities has a specific need, it asks many community groups for help finding solutions. Everyone—from family caregivers to workers in the network, advocates, professionals and volunteers—pitches in to improve services and contribute to a solution. Funding is piecemeal. Donations from members of the public, private interests and civil society all do their part.

To give an idea of the situation, these organizations often survive thanks to charitable individuals and the generosity of their community. However, there comes a time when the federal government must take responsibility and encourage such efforts, resourcefulness and ingenuity.

Good programs do exist, and their impact has been measured at length. They are clearly beneficial. Unfortunately, the lack of consistency of programs provided to organizations that help people with disabilities, as well as the stability, recurrence and coherence of the programs, must be vastly improved.

Would it be possible to make the enabling accessibility fund a permanent program, with recurring application dates everyone is aware of, in order to improve the stability of government assistance provided to organizations that help people with disabilities?

I realize that reviewing the enabling accessibility fund requires that we be prepared, above all, to implement diverse solutions in order to improve this program's performance. I also believe that as elected officials, we must promote inclusiveness. We must position ourselves as open people who create bridges with our living environments.

The inclusion of people with disabilities in society cannot be done without the support and knowledge of the medical, social and political sectors. It is difficult for a disabled person to be convinced that political authorities are truly committed to the notion of inclusion because so much remains to be done in terms of accessibility, transportation, home care and so forth.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

•(1910)

[English]

**Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her question, but I also want to thank the hon. member for her advocacy for disabled people across the country. I welcome the opportunity to address this important issue brought forward by the hon. member for Montcalm.

First, I would like to remind the member that, as soon as the Minister of Employment and Social Development heard about a situation in his riding, he immediately pulled everybody together to find a solution to keep Canadians working. They found that situation swiftly and corrected the issue very swiftly. As the minister said of the 50 hard-working Canadians with intellectual disabilities who have been serving the government well for the past 35 years by sorting, recycling, and shredding sensitive government documents, their determination and dedication to work despite their limitations inspires us all, and we certainly need to continue supporting them and disabled Canadians across the country.

That is why the minister quickly announced that their contract would be renewed for at least three more years. As for their salaries, my hon. colleague would know that they are set by the association and not by the Government of Canada. We partner with many organizations like this across Canada that help Canadians with disabilities get good jobs and fully participate within their communities.

Our government is proud of our improved registered disability savings plan that is available to more than 100,000 Canadians with disabilities. We are also proud of the Canada disability savings grants and bonds, which help Canadians with disabilities save money for their future. We believe that all Canadians, including Canadians with disabilities, should have the opportunity to contribute to our country's economy and contribute positively to their community.

Yes, disabled people are still very under-represented in the workforce, and this is concerning, but we are working at ensuring they have access to better jobs. That is why our government, through economic action plan 2015, would invest \$40 million annually in the opportunities fund for persons with disabilities. Not only that; we would also invest \$15 million over three years into the ready, willing, and able initiative of the Canadian Association for Community Living, which helps connect persons with disabilities with jobs. In my own experience as a parliamentary secretary, I have seen programs like this support literally hundreds of disabled Canadians, connecting them with available jobs.

Currently, there are more than 800,000 disabled people in the country who are unemployed. Of those people, 400,000 have some form of post-secondary education. Conversely, we have employers across the country who are saying they cannot find qualified employees to take jobs. I encourage them all to look within the disabled community. We have able, ready, and willing employees there who want to work and who have a drive to work and be self-sustainable in their lives. It may take some accommodation in the workplace to employ a person with disabilities. It may take a little

flexibility by the employer and maybe by the employee to ensure she or he can fill that job. However, I know from talking to employers who have employed disabled Canadians, as recently as a month ago, that they say that when they put the accommodations in place and support those workers they get very good workers. This money would be in addition to the \$222 million per year to better meet the employment needs of Canadian businesses and improve the employment prospects for persons with disabilities through a new generation of labour market agreements for persons with disabilities. That is \$222 million.

In closing, we are getting the job done for the disabled community in this country. I thank the member for her interest and her support for that community. We will continue to support employers and employees as they move to jobs in Canada.

•(1915)

[Translation]

**Ms. Manon Perreault:** Mr. Speaker, I honestly feel as if we were participating in two different debates. I am talking about the enabling accessibility fund. Rather than dealing with productive programs that have proven to be effective on an ad hoc basis, doling out funding in dribs and drabs year after year, it would be better if the government made the enabling accessibility fund into a well-established, transparent program with recurrent funding.

Given the urgent needs of the organizations, which at this very moment are waiting for the next call for proposals to be announced for this program, can the government at least give the applicants some more information?

The government can help change these people's lives, and I am convinced that it has the power to live up to its intentions. I am therefore asking the government whether it could, at the very least, post the date when the next call for proposals will be held, make funding recurrent and improve the transparency of the program. In so doing, it would provide a little more stability for organizations that help people with disabilities.

[English]

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to improve the lives of Canadians with disabilities.

On top of the measures I mentioned earlier, we are also extending the enabling accessibility fund to improve accessibility in workplaces and other facilities across Canada.

These expanded criteria will support the disabled people the member across is asking about. We are also supporting many organizations dedicated to the well-being of persons with disabilities, helping them connect with available jobs and equipping them with the skills and training they need.

The 50 workers I spoke about earlier have been providing excellent service to Canadians for over three decades now, and thanks to this government they will be able to continue their great work and keep on inspiring us all.

We will continue to be there for the disabled community. We will continue to support the accessibility fund.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**The Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:17 p.m.)

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