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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 3, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 3, 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pay equity is one of our primary concerns. This issue is especially important to me as a woman and as a union activist.

I was part of the struggle in Quebec's public sector for over 10 years. We succeeded. Women who quite rightly claimed that equal work deserved equal pay were vindicated.

It goes without saying that I really wish I could have participated in the committee debates. Unfortunately, for a party whose very name suggests the importance it ascribes to democracy, a party that calls itself the progressive opposition, it is a shame to see how malleable the principles of the NDP and its MPs are.

Like the rest of Canadians, the people of Quebec are entitled to full representation by their MPs, and that includes the one million people whom the Bloc Québécois represents.

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• (1410)

[*English*]

BAY OF QUINTE

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first opportunity to rise in the House, I want to thank my constituents from the new riding of Bay of Quinte for the trust and confidence they have placed in me.

My riding consists of the cities of Belleville, Quinte West, as well as Prince Edward County. It is a great honour to be the first MP to represent this riding.

I would like to congratulate all of my colleagues in this House for their victories. I encourage all members to come and explore the spectacular Bay of Quinte. It will not disappoint.

I also rise today to recognize the important work being done by Gleaners Food Bank and Tri-County Warehouse. This past weekend, I was pleased to attend their fundraiser which raised over \$23,000. What began as a pilot project in 1986 now distributes food baskets to over 150 non-profit organizations. In 2015 alone they distributed almost 9,000 food hampers across the area.

I know that all members can appreciate the important roles organizations like this play in addressing food insecurity.

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SCREAMIN BROTHERS

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the astounding achievement of two young men from my riding of Lethbridge, Alberta.

In the wake of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, J.R., at the age of 10, and Dawson, at the age of 9, wanted to find a way to help their newly adopted brother who was stranded in an orphanage in Haiti. The solution was the creation of a company called Screamin Brothers ice cream, which is a frozen treat made from fair-trade ingredients. It is also dairy and gluten free.

With sales of over half a million this year and a national distribution agreement, these young men are proven entrepreneurs. They literally had the investors from *Dragon's Den* throwing money at them asking them to partner.

Five years later, these brothers continue to give 5% of their profits back to charity on an ongoing basis.

I would like to congratulate J.R. and Dawson for being nominated for the young entrepreneur award in the 2016 Alberta business awards of distinction.

These young men remind us that, regardless of age, with a huge dream and determination, anything is possible.

*Statements by Members***COQUITLAM—PORT COQUITLAM**

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak for the first time in this place as the member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam. I would like to express my appreciation to all those who helped bring this about.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my wife, Christine, for her unfaltering support for over a decade along this path, where the outcome was never certain and sometimes seemed very remote. I thank my daughters, Katherine and Sarah, for their own enormous and unfailing support, even going so far, so I am assured, as voting for me.

I thank the members of my riding association, a sometimes small but always hardy bunch, who helped keep the lights on all those years, and the campaign team, less small but equally hardy. As the campaign unfolded and we grew in number and determination, we also became a family. I thank them all for their friendship and their huge support.

The biggest thanks goes to my constituents who placed their trust in me. It will be my mission and honour to justify that trust.

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YEAR OF THE MONKEY

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish all Chinese Canadians and all those who celebrate the lunar new year, a happy new year of the monkey.

In Chinese tradition, the monkey represents good humour, resourcefulness and wit. These are also Canadian values. May this year of the monkey bring good health, peace, creativity, and opportunities for all.

I would like to wish all Canadians of Chinese origin, including my spouse Limei:

[Member spoke in Cantonese and Mandarin]

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to Canadians of Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean descent, as well as to all Canadians who celebrate the lunar new year, from my incredibly diverse riding of New Westminster—Burnaby to all of Canada.

I am thankful for their immense contributions and continuous efforts to make Canada better for us all.

[Member spoke in Mandarin]

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•(1415)

BETHANYS HOPE FOUNDATION

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I rise to address the House for the first time, I must express my sincere gratitude to the residents of London North Centre. I am extremely humbled that they have entrusted me to be their member of Parliament.

In my riding, the Bethanys Hope Foundation is celebrating its 20th anniversary. This not-for-profit foundation was established by Dave and Lindey McIntyre in 1996 with the goal of finding a cure

for metachromatic leukodystrophy, or MLD. This disease usually leads to early death in children.

The McIntyres lost their little girl Bethany to MLD in 2000 at the age of 7.

To date, Bethanys Hope Foundation has invested \$4 million into its cutting-edge research program in London, Ontario, under the guidance of Dr. Tony Rupar. I commend this organization for giving hope to those battling with the devastation of MLD.

I encourage all of my colleagues in the House to congratulate the Bethanys Hope Foundation on 20 years of fighting for those suffering at the hands of this terrible disease.

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[Translation]

INFORMAL CAREGIVERS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to everyone who chooses to be an informal caregiver to a family member, friend or neighbour who is living with a disability associated with aging, an accident, or illness.

Every day, these caring people give so generously of their time, taking on responsibilities that include everything from helping around the house to providing physical care and medical care, and, in most cases, being a source of moral and physical support.

Every year, for the past 25 years now, informal caregivers' groups and organizations in Lévis—Lotbinière have been helping one another and taking turns in this noble cause of serving others.

Considering the degree of personal commitment that these roles often require, all informal caregivers must be mindful of their own limits and be sure to also take care of their own needs, because no one is immune to burnout.

I say bravo to them all. They are a source of steadfast support and inspiration.

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SAINT VALENTINE'S FESTIVAL

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, the municipality of Saint-Valentin is hosting its 22nd annual Saint Valentine's Festival. I congratulate the town on its creativity and hard work, as well as the volunteers for making Saint-Valentin the capital of love.

Every year, more than 1,200 people take advantage of the special postmark used at the Saint-Valentin post office. I invite my colleagues to take this opportunity to express their love to their special valentine.

We must continue to recognize and support the work that our rural communities do to promote these tourist destinations and their local products.

AVIS DE RECHERCHE TELEVISION CHANNEL

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to acknowledge the exceptional contribution made by the Avis de recherche television channel.

This public channel is dedicated to the search for suspects and people who have disappeared, as well as crime prevention. Avis de recherche supports the work of our police forces every day.

In 2013, the RCMP revealed that more than one-third of the people unlawfully at large had been apprehended thanks to the bulletins broadcast by Avis de recherche. Police forces across the country have underscored the valuable partnership they have with Avis de recherche.

The Sûreté du Québec, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the Missing Children's Network and Quebec Native Women have all praised this channel.

I invite all my colleagues to show their support for Avis de recherche so that it can continue to help police forces and all Canadians for many years to come.

* * *

• (1420)

[English]

REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 1, I attended independence day celebrations of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Our Conservative government was at the forefront in pushing for democratic reforms.

I visited Myanmar twice, first as an international election observer representing Canada, then I led an all party delegation to support Canada's contribution to advance democracy.

Former foreign affairs minister Hon. John Baird also visited Myanmar, where he conferred honorary citizenship on Aung San Suu Kyi. Therefore, it was heartening to see this honorary Canadian citizen enter Myanmar's parliament as its leader, following its historic election.

Much work still needs to be done. Myanmar's constitution is military drafted and many powers continue to be retained by the military.

We extend to Aung San Suu Kyi and her government our best wishes, as she continues to bring full democracy to Myanmar.

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[Translation]

CENTRE BLOCK FIRE OF 1916

Mr. David Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, exactly 100 years ago today, on February 3, 1916, a fire broke out in the reading room here in the Centre Block of the Parliament buildings. The fire destroyed the entire building, with the exception of the library, and claimed seven lives, including those of the member for Yarmouth, Bowman Brown Law and the assistant clerk of the House of Commons, Jean-Baptiste René Laplante, a member of the Quebec bar who served in the House from 1897 until the day

Statements by Members

of the fatal accident. Florence Bray, Mabel Morin, Randolph Fanning, Constable Alphonse Desjardins, and his uncle, who shared the same name, also died in the blaze.

Today, some of the descendants of Mr. Laplante, Messrs. Desjardins, and some of the other victims are here in Ottawa to mark the 100th anniversary of this tragedy.

Today, in commemoration of the disaster, we are using the wooden mace that served as a temporary replacement for the original mace, which was destroyed in the fire.

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[English]

WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the week of February 1 to 7 is World Interfaith Harmony Week, or WIHW, as proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 2010. The aim of WIHW is to promote harmony between peoples of all faiths.

Last year, WIHW Toronto placed third in the world out of over 900 international organizations for its programs and outreach. I would like to pay particular tribute to the founding and steering committee members, such as John Voorpostel, Khadijah Kanji, Sid Ikeda, Paul McKenna and Michelle Singh, for the tremendous amount of work they have done in promoting the message of peace and harmony. Through their efforts and outreach, WIHW activities for 2016 have grown across Canada.

Mayor John Tory has proclaimed the first week of February as World Interfaith Harmony Week in Toronto.

Love of God and love of thy neighbour is the motto of WIHW, and I hope we all embrace it.

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[Translation]

SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind the House that this week is the 26th annual Suicide Prevention Week in Quebec. This year's theme is, "You're important to us. Suicide is not an option."

As we all know, life goes by so fast, and we sometimes forget to pay attention to those around us. No one is immune from suffering, and listening to others plays a key role in suicide prevention.

Every day, three people in Quebec and 10 people in Canada take their own life. Not only do families, friends, and colleagues suffer, but the whole community is also affected by these deaths.

Statements by Members

Unfortunately, we too often experience this tragedy alone, in silence. Suicide Prevention Week is a good opportunity to talk about this issue and to share resources. I encourage all members to get involved in their communities and to promote awareness among their family members, loved ones, colleagues, and their constituents.

Together we can make a difference.

* * *

[English]

CENTRE BLOCK FIRE OF 1916

Hon. Judy Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 100 years ago today our Parliament was forever changed as a massive fire engulfed Centre Block, destroying everything, save for the Library.

Despite the efforts of Ottawa firefighters, security, soldiers, and staff, the blaze raged through the night. By morning, Florence Bray, Mabel Morin, Constable Alphonse Desjardins, Steamfitter Alphonse Desjardins, Randolph Fanning, Assistant Clerk René Laplante, and Bowman Law, the MP for Yarmouth, had lost their lives.

Undeterred, though, and in true Canadian fashion, Parliament resumed the next day with a promise to rebuild. Indeed, the MPs refused to yield to this tragedy.

Today, we remember those who perished on that fateful night 100 years ago, and we recognize the determination and spirit of those who picked up the pieces and rebuilt this great symbol of our democracy.

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• (1425)

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago, a group from the Windsor and Essex region, including Terry Weymouth, Nour Fawaz, and Dan Brown, produced a short video encouraging more women to pursue work in fields that were greatly under-represented by women, such as trades.

Entitled *Because It's 2016*, it was released on YouTube and has since enjoyed over 14,000 views. The video shows bright, enthusiastic, capable women in jobs such as firefighting, policing, welding, plumbing, engineering, scientific research, computer programming, and manufacturing.

I urge all members in the House to find ways to encourage women in their communities. Together we must challenge sexism and traditionalism, and push for equal opportunities for girls and women to pursue any career path they choose. As a country, we do ourselves a disservice to continue to label careers with gender.

I ask my colleagues to stand with me to continue the fight for equity, and to never stop forging the way forward so all women can prosper and succeed.

Whether it is on the floor of the House of Commons or the shop floor, I am proud to stand with my sisters.

CENTRE BLOCK FIRE OF 1916

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the burning of Parliament 100 years ago today was recorded by *Hansard* in the following words:

9 pm—at this time Mr. C. R. Stewart, Chief Doorkeeper of the House of Commons, came hurriedly into the Chamber and called out: "There is a big fire in the reading room; everybody get out quickly." The sitting was immediately suspended without formality, and members, officials, and visitors...fled from the Chamber. Some of them were almost overcome by the smoke and flames before reaching a place of safety.

Hansard then records the phoenix-like rebirth of the House the very next day.

[Translation]

"Friday, February 4, 1916. The House met at Three o'clock, at the Victoria Memorial Museum, the Speaker in the Chair."

I encourage all members to read the moving speeches made by the Right Hon. Sir Robert Borden and the Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier while the ashes were still smouldering at Parliament.

The mace here in this chamber is our physical connection to that very tragic day.

[English]

That Parliament was burned, but Parliament itself is immortal.

* * *

[Translation]

YEAR OF THE MONKEY

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next week, Canadians in my riding, Scarborough North, and across Canada will celebrate the beginning of the lunar new year.

[English]

Friends and families will gather for dinners, lion dances, and the exchange of red envelopes to celebrate the Year of the Monkey.

The monkey is a curious and clever creature whose virtues are a source of inspiration, as we continue to shape a strong and prosperous Canada. It is also a time to reflect on the significant contributions that Canadians of East Asian descent have made to our country's economic, cultural, and social landscape.

As a Chinese Canadian, I am proud to live in a country known for its richness and diversity. That is something we all cherish, and we should all be proud of.

As we mark the lunar new year with festivities from coast to coast to coast, let us look forward together to a future filled with good health, optimism, and prosperity for all.

From my family to all, *Xin Nian Kuai Le, Gong Hey Fat Choy.*

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that projects like energy east create well-paid jobs.

Today, TransCanada announced a deal with ABB Canada that will result in the creation of 210 direct and indirect jobs in Quebec, but the Prime Minister is determined to find new ways to block and delay the process.

Considering all of the jobs that could be created, why is the Prime Minister not supporting the energy east project?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to be in Alberta a few weeks ago and to meet with members of the oil and gas community. They reinforced for me the incredible importance of getting their resources to tidewater. We have had nine years of failure in getting resources to tidewater. We are not going to take that failed approach. We are taking a new approach to get social licence so we can actually move resources to tidewater and improve our economic situation.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I talk to a lot of Albertans and they know exactly who is standing up for their jobs. It is this party, and not that party.

The energy east project continues to grow. Yesterday, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association passed a resolution with overwhelming support for energy east. That is 479 local governments in Saskatchewan. Alberta is hurting, but Saskatchewan is hurting, too.

Why can the Prime Minister not finally show workers he cares and support energy east?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the enormous challenges facing Albertan families, facing families in Saskatchewan, facing families in Newfoundland because of the significant change in the price of oil. The Prime Minister, tonight, will be in Alberta meeting with the premier of Alberta. He is going to be talking about ways we can work together to deal with the economic situation.

I just want to say that the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities and the Minister of Veterans Affairs, my caucus colleagues from Alberta, from Saskatchewan, and from Newfoundland are incredibly strong advocates for families from those communities.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about who supports energy east: the Liberal premier of New Brunswick, the Conservative premier in Saskatchewan, the Liberal premier of Ontario, and, of course, the NDP premier in Alberta. Why this all-party support? It is because this is about jobs for people who are suffering. The only party not supporting energy east is the Liberal government.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said repeatedly in the House that we realize we need to help

Oral Questions

those organizations that are producing oil get it to tidewater. We are working hard to do that. We are setting up a process that will get social licence so that we will not have the same failure that has happened over the last nine years to actually deliver on the promise. We are going to deliver this for Canadians.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the sinking energy sector has dragged over 40,000 jobs down with it.

Meanwhile, the Liberals are making things difficult for proponents. Projects like the energy east pipeline, which would supply the Valero refinery in Lévis, Quebec, will have to wait an additional nine months before proceeding.

Instead of supporting the economy, the government is turning on the taps and building up a deficit that will put future generations in debt.

Why is it turning its back on the energy sector, the workers of Lévis and the families who depend on them?

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recognize there are enormous challenges for people in Alberta. We know that we need to work together with people in Alberta, we need to work together with people in Saskatchewan, we need to work together with people in Newfoundland. I spoke last week with the Alberta minister of finance to talk about ways we could work together. A good example is the stabilization fund. They will be putting forward a request so that they can get up to \$250 million from this fund. We believe that is an important first step. We will be taking other actions in budget 2016.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have turned their backs on the shipbuilding industry just as they have on the energy sector.

The Liberals are going back on their promise and leaving Canadian workers out in the cold. Although they said in the election campaign that they want to invest more in Canadian shipyards, now they want to have ships built abroad. However, we have a number of shipyards right here in Canada that have the capabilities and expertise required.

Will the Minister of Public Services and Procurement keep her promise to have our naval ships built in Canada by Canadians in order to create jobs here at home?

• (1435)

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

The government remains committed to the national shipbuilding strategy. We want to see our ships built in Canada. That is exactly what we are doing. If there comes an occasion when we have to look, particularly on the defence front, in terms of tugs that are needed, in the system, then we certainly may look at a more efficient and effective way of procuring those.

However, at this point in time, we are committed to building our ships in Canada.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I had the honour to going to La Loche yesterday and visiting with our extraordinary colleague, the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

The pain in the community following the tragic shootings runs deep, but so do the scars of centuries of colonialism, racism, and indifference. I was told by elders how important it is to promote and protect their language and culture in the community, to provide hope, and instill pride in young people.

Since the Prime Minister committed to implementing every one of the truth and reconciliation recommendations, will the upcoming budget include funding to make good on this important commitment for aboriginal languages?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his visit to La Loche. It is hugely important that that community know that all Canadians are behind them, and we thank him for going. I will go on Tuesday.

I, too, know how important language and culture is. Together, with the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who has in her mandate to protect language, I have the responsibility to make sure that it is present in kindergarten to grade 12. We will do that. It is hugely important to secure personal cultural identity. It is essential to good health, education, and economic outcomes.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the TPP was secretly negotiated in the dying days of the Conservative government.

Independent studies say tens of thousands of Canadians stand to lose their jobs. Those are not just numbers; they are people's livelihoods; they are Canadian families. Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders have both come out against this deal.

The Liberals are not only willing to accept a worse deal than the U.S., but they admit that they have no studies of its impact on Canadians. Will the Liberals commit to completing a thorough impact assessment and then making the study public?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear on our commitment to

engage with Canadians before taking a final position on the TPP. In fact the government has already held nearly 200 consultations.

However, Canada needs to stay at the table, and that is why the Minister of International Trade will sign today. It is simply a technical step that will allow for full consideration of the deal.

The only way the TPP can take effect is through ratification and a majority vote in this House.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we will take that as a no to publishing an impact assessment.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister won the election on a promise to do things differently, and yet today his government is signing a treaty that was negotiated by the Conservatives in secret. This agreement will have a direct impact on Canadians. Independent studies are saying that it could cost Canada 60,000 jobs. Our men, women, families, and communities will be affected. Why is the Prime Minister so determined to make the same mistakes as his Conservative predecessor? It is the same battle, Mr. Speaker, whether the government is Liberal or Conservative.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Outremont for his question. The TPP, the trans-Pacific partnership, landed in our laps late in the election campaign. We have acted very responsibly. We said that we will study the agreement, and that is exactly what we are going to do. We need to do studies and consult Canadians all across the country. That is exactly what we are doing.

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EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he says that studies need to be done. He admits that they have no study and yet they are signing the agreement today. The economy is faltering. The Liberals also made a lot of promises about employment insurance, and they have yet to make good on those promises.

[English]

The Prime Minister will arrive in Alberta where thousands of workers have lost their jobs. I sure hope he arrives with something more than “hang in there”, which we heard him say recently.

Will the government ensure these workers and their families get the support they need by getting rid of the Conservative restrictions and extending employment insurance benefits, and will this be done immediately?

● (1440)

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question and the sincerity of concern for working Canadians, just like on this side of the House. Our goal is to have a strong economy and where we unfortunately see Canadians laid off, to provide a modernized employment insurance system that will be there when they need it.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Liberals introduced another layer of red tape for energy infrastructure, but what they actually are doing is severely shaking investors' confidence in Canada. In fact, Perrin Beatty, President and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce said that good governance does not mean additional hurdles at the last minute, referring to the Liberals' plan. When will the minister stop killing jobs with these delays, with all of this uncertainty?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Liberal Party knows well, the only way to get resources to market in the 21st century is to do it in a sustainable way. That is exactly what we are doing. We introduced principles last week, transitory principles, that will re-establish the trust of Canadians in this process and that is the way we will get resources to market.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what Mr. Beatty said in response to that plan was when global businesses sit down and decide where to invest, the uncertainty and overly politicized nature of Canada's environmental regulatory process is a strike against us. It is becoming clear that the government has put this process in place so that it can rubber-stamp a "no" on good energy projects. Why else would Liberals continue to torpedo Canadian jobs?

[Translation]

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

We know that the only way we will get resources to market is in a responsible way. We have depoliticized the process by introducing transitory principles that will re-establish the trust of Canadians. That is how we will get resources to market.

[English]

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the Liberals voted against supporting the energy east pipeline. It is hard to imagine any MP from Edmonton voting against safe and sustainable pipelines, but two of them did. Where I come from, the energy industry is so respected we even named our hockey team after it. Will the infrastructure minister from Edmonton Mill Woods tell Edmontonians why he did not support the shovel-ready, job-creating infrastructure project?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I would like to reiterate, unfortunately for the Conservatives, Canadians lost trust in our environmental assessment process. The only way we will get resources to markets is to re-establish the trust of Canadians. That is exactly what the Minister of Natural Resources and I did last week by introducing transitory principles.

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a quote: "Rest assured when elected, I will pound the table on the need for pipelines. It's the safest way to transport oil and it is in the national interest."

Who said this to gain votes during the election? The member for Calgary Centre. The member voted against the motion that would affirm the House's support for workers in the energy sector and

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pipeline development. When he did that, was he pounding on the table, or was he selling out?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be with a government that sees energy and the economy as two sides of the same coin. Here we have a time where Canadians have lost confidence in our system and now we are reintroducing principles that will allow us to get access to markets, something that the former government failed miserably to do.

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EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development stood and talked about his yet to be announced investment plan, in typical Liberal fashion, he forgot about the west. The anti-energy Liberal government has gone out of its way to kill jobs in western Canada. How can the Mississauga minister for Alberta, who just voted to kill a shovel-ready, job-creating pipeline, be trusted to do what is best for western Canada?

● (1445)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear. When it comes to the economy, we have a strong growth agenda, and that agenda speaks to Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

We are creating a social contract when it comes to pipelines. We are working with the aerospace sector, the automotive sector, and the life sciences sector. We have a government that understands the importance of building strong relationships with industry to make sure that we create high-value-added, good-quality jobs, and that is what we will continue to do for the coming months.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, meanwhile, Ontario, the once proud economic engine of Canada, languishes as a have-not province under an incompetent Liberal government at Queen's Park.

Ontario has half a million people looking for work. Young people, like my kids, face especially dismal job prospects. Add to that, Ontario is pressing forward with a job-killing payroll tax scheme that will cost 54,000 jobs.

Is the government's plan to grow jobs in Ontario simply to hire Kathleen Wynne's staff to run the office of the Prime Minister? Is that all it has?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that we have a government that understands the importance of working in collaboration with our provincial and municipal counterparts. That is exactly what we are doing in Ontario. We have made announcements for southwestern Ontario and for northern Ontario. We are making investments in the auto sector. We understand the importance of manufacturing, as well.

Oral Questions

We have a plan when it comes to growing the economy. That is what we will continue to do in Ontario and across the country.

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[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that 1,000 compensation claims for harm caused at residential schools were rejected because of a technical administrative error.

This attitude flies in the face of reconciliation. Parliament did in fact offer an official apology. The victims have suffered enough. The government has to follow through on its intentions.

What does the Minister of Justice intend to do to correct this shameful situation?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to the successful implementation of the Indian residential schools settlement agreement and to honouring all its obligations under that agreement. I have asked my department to look into this issue as a matter of urgency.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the hon. minister heard the question. The question was for the justice department.

What we have learned is that 1,000 victims of sexual and physical abuse in the residential schools had their cases thrown out on a flimsy legal technicality, which is that children who were abused in institutions run by the government are not, somehow, eligible for compensation by the government.

This travesty was conjured up in the Department of Justice. I am asking the minister, as its boss, will she do the right thing? Will she tell this House that those cases will be reopened and that justice will be done? I am asking her to answer for her officials.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the member needs to know that my department is the client. The Minister of Justice's department actually gives advice.

I have asked my department to look into this, and we are going to look into it in a very serious manner right now.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal House leader got it wrong. He tried to justify his interference with citizenship judges on the Immigration and Refugee Board just because he did not like who was appointed.

These people were already appointed. He has no right to use his position to intimidate them. Judicial independence is paramount. These judges and tribunal members make rulings on matters between the government and Canadians. Will they now feel pressured to side with the new Liberal government in order to keep their jobs?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that our letters to these members were about personnel matters and not about cases or files that were before them. It is an elementary thing that the Governor in Council can interact with the people we appoint to different jobs on personnel matters.

The member should resist conflating those two issues in a way that is really irresponsible.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the government House leader is getting to know the Ethics Commissioner far too well. We still remember his ethical challenges, dating back to 2003. Then this December, he was held responsible for illegal fundraising. Now he is trying to deliberately intimidate arm's-length bodies.

Why will the minister not admit that it was wrong to abuse his position by threatening judges and by trying to intimidate them? How much further is he prepared to go?

● (1450)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us see how far that member is prepared to go. Is he prepared to go about 25 metres outside in the foyer and repeat those exact same comments? That would be interesting—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a spade is a spade. Political interference is political interference.

When the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons contacted the judges at the Immigration and Refugee Board, he knew that he was directly interfering in their work.

In the past, this type of conduct forced ministers to resign.

Just how low do the Liberals plan to go when interpreting the ethics rules?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will say exactly where we will not be going, and that is where the former government found itself after publicly and systematically attacking the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. That is something we will not do.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, political interference is political interference. This is not just about the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. In his letter, he indicated that he was writing on behalf of the Prime Minister.

Why does the Prime Minister believe that he has the right to openly interfere in the affairs of judges and members of quasi-judicial bodies?

Oral Questions

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government decided that the way these people were appointed to positions that they would not hold until after the election was not at all transparent and represented an abuse of the process. The former government tried to abuse a political appointment process.

That is why I wrote to these people about a personnel matter and not to raise a substantive issue, which the member knows full well.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is outrageous that the government will not study the impact of the TPP before signing on the dotted line, but we know that the deal would have serious consequences for Canadians: tens of thousands of jobs lost, higher drug costs, stifled innovation, rising inequality.

We all know that if the minister did not support this deal, she would not sign it. Is the minister rushing to sign the deal to try to get it done before Canadians know how much it will hurt them?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the signing of the TPP is a technical step. The real important moment is the date of ratification.

Before that decision is made, we will put this matter to Parliament. A parliamentary committee will study it, Canadians across the country will have a chance to pronounce on it, and we will undertake expert opinion. Therefore, we are doing precisely what we promised, which is to study the accord properly before ratifying it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about the economic situation. Now is the time to make good decisions, but the government insists on signing an agreement that is going to cost us 60,000 jobs, create greater inequalities, and hurt our dairy producers.

The government did not even take the time to study the important issues related to the trans-Pacific partnership.

How can the government sign an agreement that is not good for Canadians?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to sign the agreement to give ourselves time to examine it. The agreement is very complex. Obviously, consultations have been held. Some people support this agreement and others do not.

We are going to hold consultations, including in committee, and Parliament will have the last word.

* * *

• (1455)

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, dry conditions across the interior of British Columbia and

throughout the western provinces in 2015 created significant hardship for our farmers. In my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country, and throughout western Canada, we have some of the best farmers in the world, who are focused on building a better future.

Can the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food inform the House what measures the government is taking to address the situation facing farmers affected by last year's drought?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, extreme weather created difficulties for the western Canadian livestock industry last summer. This week our government released a list of additional regions for tax deferrals in many areas throughout the western provinces, which will help farmers focus on the future.

Since taking office, we have announced over \$50 million in cost-shared funding. Our government supports our hard-working farmers and ranchers.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number of terrorist attacks is growing. We have been waiting for weeks to hear the government's plan, but there has been nothing but silence.

Yesterday, reporters asked the Minister of National Defence about Canada's plans, but he referred them to his colleague, the foreign affairs minister, who is currently in Rome.

Will the Minister of National Defence face up to his responsibilities or do I need to ask someone else the question?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the attacks that are happening around the world are not just focused on one plan. The hon. member knows that on a daily basis, our security agencies are working in co-operation with our allies on many different attacks. Unfortunately, I cannot divulge this information due to security issues.

However, in terms of the actual plan for Operation Impact, it will be coming soon, and it will be a plan Canadians can be proud of.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister indicated in the Department of National Defence's performance report that he is going to participate in coalition operations abroad.

Can the minister tell us how he is going to help our allies and fight terrorists by withdrawing our combat forces from Syria and Iraq?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not withdrawing from the fight against terrorism. Also, we are not withdrawing from the fight against ISIL. We will be enhancing our fight against ISIL.

When the plan comes out, it will be a plan Canadians can be proud of.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, instead of the defence minister talking about mistakes of the past, let us talk about mistakes of the present. Taking our CF-18s out of the air combat mission is a mistake. The delays are a mistake. Incoherent comments are a mistake. Undermining Canada's reputation is a mistake.

When will the Minister of National Defence quit dithering, admit his mistakes, and finally give us the plan to fight ISIS?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the plan will be coming out soon. I can assure the member of that.

When it comes to stopping the air strikes, yes, our government is committed to that. However, we are committed to the fight. I have done a thorough assessment by going into the region twice, meeting with commanders on the ground and speaking with my coalition partners, to my partners in Iraq, and to the northern Kurds as well.

When the plan comes out, it will be a plan Canadians can be proud of.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the first command ordered by Chief of the Defence Staff Jonathan Vance was to establish Operation Honour to eliminate sexual misconduct in the military. General Vance explicitly stated that this would require a cultural change within the Armed Forces. However, the Minister of National Defence contradicted General Vance and said, "It's not the military culture per se that leads to [sexual misconduct]".

Why is the minister making the mistake of brushing off the serious issue of sexual misconduct in the military?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Chief of the Defence Staff General Vance and I are in lockstep on this. We have zero tolerance for any type of sexual misconduct or any type of harassment, and we will stomp this out.

● (1500)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative-initiated bombing mission against ISIL is coming to an end in just a few weeks. Not only has the government not given us its new plan, but now we are also learning that the plan may not be submitted to Parliament.

Openness and transparency should be more than just a catch phrase.

My question is for the Minister of National Defence. Will he clear up this confusion and confirm that there will be a debate and a vote in the House?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said first, my colleagues and I and the coalition have been consulting. The plan will be discussed. As to exactly the mechanism and how, that will also come out when we announce the plan.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government promised to end the bombing mission in Iraq, yet it is still continuing. The government said it would come up with a new plan, and again Canadians are still waiting. When the Minister of National Defence was asked a simple question about whether there will be a vote in the House, yesterday he said, "You can't just answer yes or no".

Actually, we think that it should be possible, so let me ask this of the minister again. Will the Minister of National Defence confirm that the House will hold a debate and a vote on the government's new mission in Iraq, yes or no?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the timeline for how long it will take, Canadians expect us to get it right. When we send our men and women into harm's way, we need to make sure that the plan is right and that when they go into a high-threat environment, we will be looking after their interests.

There will be a consultation. As to a consultation in the House, that will come out when the announcement is made.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have likely irresponsibly promised to immediately remove the visa requirement on Mexico. Before making this statement, did the minister's department conduct a full formal visa review of Mexico to assess whether the conditions meet Canada's objective, evidence-based thresholds to safely grant a visa exemption? If not, does the minister not want to know the facts from a formal visa review before deciding whether it is in Canada's best interest to immediately grant a visa exemption?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague across the aisle probably knows, the removal of the visa was in our platform. This is a major step in improving Canada–Mexico relations. I have been in consultation with my department on the issues involved in this, we have been studying it carefully, and I am pleased to report that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had a very positive meeting recently with his Mexican and American counterparts.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take it that it was a political decision and not an evidence-based decision.

With regard to today's American Senate hearing on Canada's fast-track refugee initiative, how many times has the minister's agency briefed the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on this issue? If the minister is so confident in the integrity of this process, why is the government avoiding this hearing by refusing to send senior officials to represent Canadian interests?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that we are accountable in this House and not in the U.S. Senate. That is how Canadian accountability works.

However, Ambassador Doer was in touch with the Senate to confirm what the U.S. government has been told in repeated briefings right from day one. That is, Canada has layers of security-screening work in place that are working very effectively under the guidance of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency, CSIS, and the RCMP. The system is strong and there will be no compromise on safety.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has been eager to make promises without plans. The refugee resettlement plan is failing. Health workers who are volunteering to work with Syrian refugees are confused about how many refugees are coming, what sort of care they will need, and who is going to foot the bill.

When is the Liberal government going to provide a real plan that works for refugees?

• (1505)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that we have a real plan, and it is evolving as it ought to evolve. We are now at close to 16,000 refugees. We will hit our target of 25,000 refugees by the end of February. The refugees are settling across the country.

I just read a story about a wonderful case of two Syrian refugees working in a New Brunswick restaurant where the owner had not been able to find anyone who could cook Middle-Eastern food, and they are doing fantastically well in New Brunswick with a job already.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of New Brunswick, the people of Madawaska—Restigouche are worried about the country's economy and want to know how they can share their thoughts and concerns.

Next week, I am hosting public meetings in Edmundston and Campbellton, and I invite people to come and share their thoughts and concerns.

Could the Minister of Finance tell the House what other measures are being put in place to ensure that all Canadians and Acadians can participate in the budget process?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Madawaska—Restigouche for his question.

Oral Questions

I am proud of the fact that our department is conducting the most open pre-budget consultations in history. To date, we have been in contact with 150,000 people, and 3,500 of them have provided formal comments. This is nearly three times the number of comments received by the previous government.

The consultations continue at budget.gc.ca, and I invite all Canadians to participate.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, acting on the ombudsman's recommendation, the Conservative Party promised to give personal identification cards to all veterans. The card would have been given to veterans upon discharge from the armed forces regardless of the length of their military service.

Today the government is talking about ceasing production of the old identification card, which is neither specific to veterans nor given automatically following discharge from the armed forces.

Will the government immediately replace the old card with an official identification card for veterans, not a discount card like it is planning to do with the proposed CFOne card?

[English]

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am also the Associate Minister of National Defence, which means that I am working hard with my partners in National Defence to look at ways to ensure there is a seamless transition between National Defence and Veterans Affairs. We are identifying those possibilities where we can work forward and allow our veterans and people serving to get the assistance they need in place.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning, Quebeckers got some very bad news. Rona, one of the crown jewels of our economy, is being sold to the Americans.

For now, the U.S. company is promising not to get rid of the headquarters or any jobs. However, we have been around this block before, and we all remember Rio Tinto and the rest. The government is responsible for reviewing foreign takeovers of our companies and approving or rejecting them.

Will the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development review this transaction to ensure that it includes clear guarantees to protect our jobs, and will the review be made public?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, the shareholders need to review this particular transaction. The Competition Bureau will also look at this investment transaction.

As per the Investment Canada Act, any amount over \$600 million does trigger a net benefit analysis. We will make sure that we follow that process. We will always look out for what is in the best interests of Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Lyme disease is a serious issue. I have listened to several constituents coping with the debilitating symptoms and treatment challenges.

[Translation]

Can the Minister of Health tell the House about the government's plans to improve the prevention, early detection and effective treatment of Lyme disease?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Lyme disease does have a devastating impact on families and communities.

We welcome the passing of Bill C-442, An Act respecting a Federal Framework on Lyme Disease. I very much look forward to developing that federal framework along with our partners and stakeholders, including patient groups. We are working to deliver a robust conference this coming May, which will help shape a federal framework.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has also developed an action plan on Lyme disease to build awareness of the risks and better track the disease, as well as investing in more research.

* * *

• (1510)

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. She is the Attorney General of Canada and chief law officer of the crown responsible for holding the rule of law at all times.

Last June, Parliament passed the Reform Act. As a result, section 49.8 of the Parliament of Canada Act required her and her cabinet colleagues to vote in four separate recorded votes last November 5 determining which powers the Prime Minister would have.

Did she and her cabinet colleagues comply with the law? Did they vote four times in four separate recorded votes last November 5?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the member that many of us on this side supported the Reform Act. I, myself, voted for it. I want to assure the House and the member that at all times, everyone on this side complied with all legislation.

*[Translation]***FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Lowe's, the giant American hardware chain, wants to purchase RONA for \$3.2 billion.

As we know, RONA buys from a huge number of suppliers in Quebec, including Garant shovels and many lumber manufacturers. Under the Investment Canada Act, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development can choose to authorize or refuse the transaction or impose conditions.

We know that the minister is going to follow the process, but we want to know what concrete action he plans to take to protect the suppliers and the head office in Boucherville.

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I had mentioned before, the Competition Bureau will look at this particular transaction. The shareholders also have to look at this particular transaction.

When it comes to the federal government and the responsibility that I have, as per the Investment Canada Act, there is a process in place. There are resources in place to do a proper net benefit analysis, and we will do that, because it is very important that we follow this process in the best interests of Canadians.

* * *

CENTRE BLOCK FIRE OF 1916

The Speaker: Today, Parliament marks the 100th anniversary of the great fire of February 3, 1916, which ravaged most of the original Centre Block.

On that night, as the new deputy speaker, Edgar Nelson Rhodes of Nova Scotia, was in the Chair presiding over the House for the first time, a fire broke out in the Commons Reading Room.

The fire grew to a raging blaze that would claim seven lives: Mr. Bowman Brown Law, MP, representative of the county of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia; Mr. J.B.R. Laplante, Assistant Clerk, House of Commons; Mrs. Mabel Morin and Mrs. Florence Bray, who were guests of the Speaker of the House, Albert Sévigny; Mr. Randolph Fanning of the Post Office Department; Mr. Alphonse Desjardins of the Public Works Department and his nephew, also Mr. Alphonse Desjardins of the Dominion Police Force. We are honoured that descendants of some of those individuals are here with us in the gallery today.

[Translation]

The next morning, most of the Centre Block was nothing but smoking ruins. Only the library and the northwest wing of the building were spared.

[English]

Were it not for the quick thinking of librarian Michael Connolly MacCormac, credited for closing the Library's iron doors, this beautiful space and its thousands of irreplaceable books would also have been lost.

[Translation]

The House of Commons mace was destroyed in the fire, and when the first sitting of the House following the fire took place on February 4, 1916, at 3:00 p.m. in the Victoria Memorial Museum, now home to the Canadian Museum of Nature, the Senate loaned its mace to the House.

• (1515)

[English]

For the next three weeks, the mace belonging to the Ontario Legislature was used until a temporary mace made of wood was fashioned. That wooden mace was preserved and is being used in the chamber today, as it has been every February 3rd since 1977.

[Translation]

The wooden mace will then be displayed in the House of Commons foyer. It serves as a tangible reminder of the great fire of 1916 and bears witness to the history of the Parliament of Canada.

[English]

I invite all hon. members to join me and our honoured guests after question period in room 216 North, where the Curator of the House of Commons will provide a historical review of the great fire.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PAY EQUITY

The Speaker: It being 3:17 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, February 2, 2016, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

[And the bells having rung:]

The Speaker: The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

• (1525)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 12)

YEAS

Members

Adlag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton

Alghabra
Amos
Angus
Arya
Ayoub

Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Bennett
Bittle
Blair
Bossio
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Brosseau
Caron
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Christopherson
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Donnelly
Dubé
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garrison
Gill
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Kwan
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Marcil
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef
Moore
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey

Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bélanger
Benson
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice
Bratina
Brison
Cannings
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Choquette
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dion
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardcastle
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kang
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Morneau
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin

Routine Proceedings

Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Ruimy	Rusnak
Saganash	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sorbara
Spengemann	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Thériault
Trudel	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Weir
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid— 224

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Brassard
Brown	Calkins
Carrie	Chong
Clarke	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeschen
Egliniski	Fast
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Hillyer	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kenney	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
McCaughey (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
Obhrai	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Raitt	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shipley
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tilson	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Watts	Waugh
Webber	Wong
Yurdiga— 91	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1530)

[English]

CANADIAN POLAR COMMISSION

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2014-2015 Canadian Polar Commission annual report.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, four reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group.

The first report concerns the 2015 summer meeting of the Western Governors Association that was held in Lake Tahoe, Nevada, United States of America, from June 24 to 26, 2015. The second report concerns the 8th annual conference of the Southeastern United States-Canadian Provinces Alliance that was held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada, from June 28 to 30, 2015. The third report concerns the Pacific North West Economic Region 25th annual summit that was held in Big Sky, Montana, United States of America, from July 12 to 16, 2015. The fourth report concerns the 69th annual meeting of the Council of State Governments Southern Legislative Conference that was held in Savannah, Georgia, United States of America, from July 18 to 22, 2015.

I have served as the co-chair for the House of Commons on the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group for seven years now, and this will be the last time I will be presenting reports on behalf of the association.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees in the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the second report later this day.

* * *

[Translation]

SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS ACT

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-215, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Employment Insurance Act (volunteer firefighters).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to reintroduce a bill that I introduced in the previous Parliament.

The purpose of the bill is to protect volunteer firefighters, who are key to many rural communities. Their decision to respond to a fire should not adversely affect their other job or their employment insurance benefits, if they are receiving any at the time.

My bill seeks not only to protect volunteer firefighters and our communities, but also to make it easier to recruit volunteer firefighters in our small communities.

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

* * *

NATIONAL PERINATAL BEREAVEMENT AWARENESS DAY ACT

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-216, An Act to establish National Perinatal Bereavement Awareness Day.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is important to raise awareness about perinatal bereavement in Canada, because it is one of the most stressful experiences a couple can go through. Unfortunately, thousands of Canadians go through this very difficult experience every year and they need support.

I think that Parliament should become aware of this reality and provide more help to the affected parents. That help could only have a positive impact. I am pleased to introduce this bill today.

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

* * *

•(1535)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the second report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is that agreed.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

CENTRE BLOCK FIRE OF 1916

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, having had consultations with all parties in the House, if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the House commemorate the 100th anniversary of the disastrous fire which destroyed the original Centre Block and took the lives of seven people; and that the Office of Curator of the House of Commons be directed to submit ideas to the Board of Internal Economy for a physical reminder of that tragic event, such as a stained glass window, be installed during the planned renovations of the Centre Block.

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

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Should you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion.

[Translation]

That, notwithstanding the provisions of any standing order, for the remainder of 2016, when a recorded division is to be held on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, except recorded divisions deferred to the conclusion of oral questions, the bells to call in the members shall be sounded for not more than 30 minutes.

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

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition that sadly highlights the fact that 22-year-old Cassandra Kaulius was tragically killed by a drunk driver. A group of families who have also lost loved ones to impaired drivers called Families for Justice believes that Canada's impaired driving laws are much too lenient. They are calling for new mandatory sentencing and that the crime be called what it really is, vehicular homicide.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition from a number of Yukoners on fair electoral representation. They note that the number of votes often does not reflect the number of MPs. They would like each community to have fair and accountable representation and that people can cast an equal and effective vote and be governed by a fairly elected Parliament.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, government orders will be extended by 10 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1540)

[*English*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.) moved that Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure for me to be standing here today. This is my first opportunity to really give my maiden speech in the House, and I am thankful for the opportunity. I am pleased to be part of a government that is taking steps to restore the balance that is so important for positive working relationships between employees and employers. I also want to thank department officials, the hard-working team of public servants, who have supported the quick tabling of this important bill.

The legislation we are discussing today reflects a commitment made several times by the Prime Minister and this government, the commitment to restore a fair and balanced approach to labour relations in this country.

We believe that both employers and unions play critical roles in ensuring that workers receive decent wages and are treated fairly in safe, healthy work environments.

Among other things, our labour laws help ensure that there is balance between the rights of unions and the rights of employers. The government respects unions and understands that they have been a positive force for the workers in Canada through collective bargaining.

Unions have improved the lives of not only their own members but all Canadians. They have negotiated several items that most workers take for granted, such as the five-day work week, and maternity and parental leave.

When the system works, Canadians benefit and great things happen. That is why unions must be on an equal footing in critical negotiations over wages, safety, pensions, and other workplace issues.

Two bills adopted during the last session of Parliament, Bill C-525 and Bill C-377, upset that balance. We believe they must be repealed, and we are here today to do just that. We have tabled Bill C-4, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act. If passed, this bill will repeal the legislative changes made by Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. This would be a key first step toward restoring a fair and balanced approach to labour relations, and ultimately build a strong, robust economy, because unfortunately this balance was significantly upset by the political agenda of the previous government.

Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 have serious ramifications for workers and unions in Canada. Both of these were private members' bills. We do not doubt that the members presenting them intended to improve labour relationships. Unfortunately, the outcomes put unions at a clear disadvantage.

Let me start with Bill C-377. This bill amended the Income Tax Act to require labour organizations and labour trusts, including all unions in provincial and federal jurisdictions, to file detailed financial and other information, including information on non-labour relations activities, with the Canada Revenue Agency. The information contained in these returns would then be made available on CRA's website thereby publicly revealing these organizations' assets, liabilities, income, and expenditures, including the salaries paid to their officers, directors, and other specified employees.

• (1545)

The bill also required labour organizations and labour trusts to provide details on the time spent by certain members of their staff on political lobbying and non-labour relation activities. If organizations do not comply with these measures, they would face possible fines of \$1,000 for each day of non-compliance, up to a maximum of \$25,000 per year. This information would then be made publicly available on the CRA's website.

If the bill were left in place, employers would have access to the union's financial information, without requiring employers to make the same information available to unions. This would clearly put unions at a disadvantage during the collective bargaining process.

In addition, the financial reporting provisions of Bill C-377 were directed solely at labour organizations and labour trusts, not at other organizations, such as professional organizations that benefit from similar treatment under the Income Tax Act.

This kind of treatment is clearly discriminatory against trade unions. Why would they be subject to the onerous reporting obligations imposed by Bill C-377?

As hon. colleagues may recall, a number of other serious concerns were raised when the bill was brought forward.

Government Orders

The bill creates unnecessary extra red tape for unions. The fact is that there is already legislation in place to ensure that unions are accountable to their members. The Canada Labour Code already requires unions to provide their financial statements to their members on request, and free of charge.

It should be noted that many provinces have similar requirements in their labour statutes.

I would also like to remind the members of the House that Bill C-377 poses a potential breach of individual privacy.

In addition to raising privacy concerns, Bill C-377 creates unnecessary red tape for unions. Bill C-377 duplicates the accountability measures put in place by almost every province, which have similar requirements in their labour laws. Section 110 of Canada Labour Code already requires unions, as well as employer organizations, to provide financial statements to their members upon request and free of charge.

The bill also puts unions at a disadvantage during collective bargaining by giving employers access to key information about unions, without being required to reciprocate.

Bill C-377 has tilted the playing field in favour of employers. For example, employers would know how much money the union had in its strike fund for a possible work stoppage and how long employees would stay out if it came to a strike. The union's most important negotiating lever is undermined by the bill.

There have also been concerns raised about the constitutionality of Bill C-377. The bill presents a potential constitutional challenge because the objective of the bill could be seen not as taxation but as a regulation of unions, which is, in large part, a matter of provincial jurisdiction.

There have been also concerns over the constitutionality of the bill. The provinces of Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island have all stated their opposition to the bill for exactly those reasons.

The Alberta Union of Provincial Employees has launched a constitutional challenge to Bill C-377 before the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench.

The bill is also problematic because it could apply to non-union organizations, such as some of the investment funds and others.

Clearly, some serious legal issues lie within Bill C-377.

● (1550)

Let us not forget the colossal administrative burden the new reporting requirements would have on unions, particularly the smaller ones, and on government itself.

To meet the requirements of Bill C-377, the Canada Revenue Agency would have to develop the necessary IT systems and other administrative systems. This, of course, comes at a hefty price, at least \$2 million.

The Minister of National Revenue, knowing that we would be introducing legislation to repeal Bill C-377, has waived its reporting requirements for 2016. This will save labour organizations and trusts

the time and money it would have cost to collect and file the information. However, this waiver is only a short-term solution.

Bill C-377 was loudly condemned by many labour organizations across the country. In fact, the president of the Quebec Union of Public Employees, SPGQ, Richard Perron referred to it as a "contemptible attack on our democratic values".

I believe most employers appreciate that a level playing field in collective bargaining is essential to creating safe and productive workplaces. By the same token, an unbalanced approach such as this one can lead to unnecessary tensions and other problems in the workplace.

In fact, when the standing committee on legal and constitutional affairs held its deliberations on Bill C-377, the Hon. Erna Braun, MLA, who is the minister of labour and immigration of my home province of Manitoba, gave evidence. She expressed what she called serious concerns. She said:

Our view is that this bill is unnecessary and that it infringes on provincial jurisdiction...Under 10 per cent of workers in Canada work in federally regulated workplaces. Otherwise, the provincial governments throughout the country can and do independently set their own legislative priorities in the area of labour.

She went on to say that the provinces had been working with employers and employees for decades, and were already doing a good job of regulating labour relations. Our government agrees with that statement.

Bill C-377 is problematic for many reasons, but it is inconsistent with the constitution. That alone should be reason enough to repeal the legislative changes it made.

This brings me to Bill C-525, which was also a private member's bill. It actually came into force last June. This bill, which modified the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act, changed the union certification and de-certification systems. The bill also replaced the existing card check system with a mandatory voting system.

Bill C-525 makes it harder for unions to be certified as collective bargaining agents, and makes it easier for a bargaining agent to be decertified.

When we asked stakeholders what they thought of the new certification rules, many were displeased. Many said that the previous card check system was not only faster and more efficient, but it was also more likely to be free of employer interference. Overall, as many union spokespersons have pointed out, the card check model is faster, more efficient, and more likely to be free of employer interference than the new method.

Furthermore, repealing this bill will also alleviate pressure on the resources of the Canada Industrial Relations Board and the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board since these boards would need to hold fewer certification votes.

Government Orders

•(1555)

Despite the opposing views on the merits of the new and old systems, both labour and employer representatives were highly critical of how these changes were brought about. Changing our fundamental labour laws with a private member's bill, without conducting consultation through the traditional tripartite process, is not only wrong but potentially very problematic.

As Mr. John Farrell, the executive director of Federally Regulated Employers—Transportation and Communications, told the parliamentary committee in February 2014:

This critical consultation process is completely bypassed when changes to the labour relations regime are proposed through the mechanism of one-off private members' bills. It provides no meaningful way for pre-legislative consultation to take place in an open and transparent manner, and it seeks changes without the required engagement of practitioners, recognized third-party neutrals, and the resources of government agencies charged with the responsibility to implement, adjudicate, and monitor the industrial relations system in the federal jurisdiction.

In the past, labour reforms of this sort were the subject of lengthy discussions between unions, employers, and the government. It was vital to have everyone at the table. This consultation process is essential to maintaining a fair and workable labour-management balance. It is a process that this government is strongly committed to. Therefore, we are also repealing this bill, because it upsets the balance that is so necessary for successful collective bargaining in this country.

That delicate balance is essential to sound labour relations, and the employer-employee relationship is vital to our economy. Why? Because sound labour relations provide stability and predictability in the labour force. These elements underpin a strong economy.

Unions play a critical role in the employer-employee relationships. Unions advocate for good wages and safe working environments. These are things that we can easily take for granted. Unfortunately, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 were designed to “weaken the labour movement, period”. Those words came from Jerry Dias, president of Unifor. He also said that it did not have a stitch of common sense to it.

By repealing Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, our government will restore a fair and balanced approach to labour relations in Canada.

I am proud of the work we are doing to help restore this balance to the labour landscape of Canada. To put it simply, good labour relations are good for all of us.

The issue at hand here is very simple. These bills diminish and weaken Canada's labour movement. Bill C-4 will support and strengthen it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of my party to speak about this important bill, which we should all agree is a bad bill.

The bill we are dealing with today in the House of Commons is a direct attack on the basic principles that all Canadians share. This bill is an attack on democracy, accountability, and transparency.

The first bill that the Conservative government introduced under the former prime minister had to do with transparency. The first bill

that this government has introduced is an attack on union transparency.

•(1600)

[*English*]

My question is quite clear. Yesterday the Prime Minister said, in answering a question I asked him, that Bill C-525 is undemocratic. Can the minister explain to this House how it could be undemocratic to have a secret-ballot vote?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, it is undemocratic because the process used by the previous government did not include consultation. They did not go out into our community and apparently did not even consult with employers. Rather, this was jammed through, in a process not supported by either side, and caused unfairness.

The bill itself has three components. The first purpose, it would seem, is to make unionization more difficult. It is more difficult under the bill to be certified and much easier to become decertified. The idea of the voting system, whether by card check or by voting, was put in as an addition to the real purpose the government apparently had, which was to disrupt and cause unfairness in labour relations.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I can see that some people are getting very passionate about this. I would say that if members want to have their say to please stand up during question period, and they will likely have an opportunity to ask questions. While someone is speaking, it would be nice to be respectful of the person speaking.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. I am pleased to participate in today's discussion on Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. Over 60% of workers in the riding of Jonquière are unionized.

My question is for my colleague. Why is there nothing in the bill about sick leave? That is unfortunate. We are currently negotiating with public servants. Are we going to include sick leave later and negotiate with public servants in good faith?

[*English*]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, the question of sick leave is related to negotiations with the public service and is not really the issue in this bill. This bill relates to repealing two onerous bills that were basically political instruments meant to make unionization harder and negotiations impossible and to cause disruption to the labour movement. I can assure the member that we are working collectively with the civil service to find a reasonable, open, transparent, and fair process when negotiating with workers.

Government Orders

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the minister for introducing this bill in the House of Commons today. We can all agree that over the last number of months, we have had many people in our constituencies raise concerns about Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 and the fact that they were going to have a tremendous negative impact on unions and unionized workers in the country.

I would like to ask the minister today, as she moves this motion to make those bills redundant, if she thinks this was an attempt to break unions in this country and sever unionized workers.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, the motivation for the bills is somewhat speculative but would indicate that the previous government had an agenda that was perhaps pro-business to the point that they would actually be disruptive. I am pro-business but also pro-labour. A fair and balanced relationship between both sides, when it comes to collective bargaining and many of the advancements in Canada in terms of labour relations, is crucial.

The purpose of the bill was a clear attack on the organized labour movement, one that was not necessary and was not called for. Even the employers found it despicable, unwarranted, and a direct attack on the trade union movement.

• (1605)

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to talk about the Bloc Québécois's position on this bill. We would like to congratulate the minister for taking such prompt action and doing the right thing.

I believe that this bill should never have been introduced and that her actions will remedy an injustice to unions because the existing bill required accountability only from the unions and not from the major employer organizations. I think that the balance she spoke about is quite warranted. I congratulate her for introducing the bill. She can count on our support.

[English]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that recognizes the importance of the union movement, historical and present, as it continues to contribute valuable knowledge and insight to us as a government. I am sure that it tried to co-operate with the previous government.

Good relationships with both employers and employees is absolutely critical for Canada's success.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister talked about consultation with unions, but I would like to know if she talked to anyone other than union leadership. That has been a cozy relationship. She met with the Teamsters several times, the American Federation of Labor, and some of the biggest unions in Canada, but has she actually talked to union members? The data we have shows that 86% of union members support the legislation we put forward last year. Did she have consultations with actual Canadian workers before she brought Bill C-4 forward?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, I actually spoke to 22,000 people in the riding of Kildonan—St. Paul over the past year and a half. Not only that, I talked to employers, who are represented

under FETCO, the executive of unions, and many members of the unions themselves. Consultation was broad.

The real point is that during the election, the Liberal Party, our government now, made it very clear that our intention was to repeal these two bills and restore a fair and balanced table for labour and industrial relations in Canada.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the minister for bringing this legislation to the House.

I just have a simple question based on historical fact. Over the number of years I have been in the House, and even before, labour relations has always been done through a tripartite process, and the tripartite process includes labour and employers, who talk together about changes to the labour code. Why is it that this government chose not to do what the Mulroney government did, which was to put together a process like that that talks about the balance that is important for labour and for employers?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, the route the previous government took is questionable.

Many of my friends are business owners. I was a business owner myself before I joined the House. Respect for labour relations and organizations that represent workers makes better relationships in that workplace for that business and ultimately for the Canadian economy.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to greet all the members of the House once again. I have the great honour and pleasure to rise on behalf of my party. Before broaching the more political aspect of this issue, I would like to salute my hon. colleague the minister, who is introducing her first bill. This is an important moment for her.

[English]

I really want to thank her for what she is doing, but I hope she will understand that she is wrong on that project.

I have respect for her, because we share the same experience. I have been a member of the National Assembly, which is the provincial legislature in Quebec. She has also been a member of a provincial legislature, in Manitoba. However, the point is that the hon. minister was a member of the provincial legislature under what party? It was the NDP. It is real proof, when we read the bill, that the roots are there, and it is all wrong for the people of Canada.

[Translation]

It is a sad day for some of the fundamental principles that we share in the House of Commons. This bill attacks the principles of democracy, accountability, and transparency. Those are fundamental principles of democracy that were intrinsic in our two bills and, unfortunately, are being trampled on by Bill C-4 introduced by the Liberal government.

Government Orders

It is clear that this bill is the Liberal Party of Canada's way of thanking the union bosses for spending millions of dollars, without consulting their members, to fight the Conservative Party before the election campaign, when they were not subject to the restrictions on election expenses. Thus, this is a way of thanking the union leaders, but not Canadians.

Let us also remember that all of this is due to the work of the previous government. Our government introduced two private members' bills, which shows that it was open to letting its caucus participate in the democratic process. I am talking about Bill C-377, which has to do with accountability, and Bill C-525, which has to do with the democratic process and which became law. Bill C-4 directly attacks these two fundamental pillars, and we are going to demonstrate why it is a bad bill.

First, let us talk about the issue of democracy. Bill C-525 allowed for and even required a secret ballot for union certification. If ever the union members wanted to terminate their union certification, that also had to be done by secret ballot.

All members of this House were elected by secret ballot. Throughout our history, thousands of Canadians across the country have been elected and sat in the House because of the principle of the secret ballot. How can members of the House be against secret ballots? There is no better way to give unions even more authority than to give them the support of members through a secret ballot.

Here is what currently happens. Someone knocks on the worker's door, accompanied by three or four friends, and asks the worker if he wants to sign the sheet. The three or four friends may remember the brave man who chose not to sign the sheet. Is it not better to proceed by secret ballot? This calls for a much more extensive democratic process.

Yesterday, during question period, we questioned the Prime Minister about the union bosses who illegally financed the Liberal Party, which was recognized by Elections Canada. The Prime Minister replied that this was a response to our opposition to unions in Bill C-525, which was undemocratic. I have a lot of respect for the office of prime minister, but I still do not understand how a Canadian prime minister elected by secret ballot can find this undemocratic. I am sorry, but this is a fundamental principle that we must respect.

[*English*]

How can the Prime Minister say it is undemocratic when we vote by secret vote, when this guy was elected through a secret vote? How come?

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

What the minister is saying does not make sense, because she said there were no consultations. Stop right there. We held consultations. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance examined this issue, as did the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce and the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

How many parliamentary consultations did the government hold about this bill? None. They have a lot of nerve telling us something

is undemocratic when they did not consult. For one thing, that is not true, and for another, they themselves did not do it.

Another disturbing thing about the bill is that the secret ballot principle exists in provincial legislatures in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. I see some folks over there who will probably say that I am a Quebec MP and that Quebec does not have it. They are right. However, in my previous life, when I was a provincial MNA, I introduced a bill about that. My idea never became a reality, unfortunately. We were not in power. I just want people to know that I am seeing things logically.

I also want to point out that when we look at all of this, the motivation behind it is that they want to protect union bosses' benefits. Those same union leaders are elected by secret ballot. Why should union leaders be elected by secret ballot if secret ballots are not allowed for union certification votes? According to the Prime Minister, that is undemocratic. This is illogical.

In fact, people spoke in favour of our bill. For instance, Dan Kelly of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business had this to say:

As secret ballot votes are a cornerstone of our democracy, if the process is good enough to elect our politicians, it should be good enough to form a union.

If I understood correctly what the minister said earlier, she definitely did not consult Canadians. The 22,000 people she mentioned were all directly linked to the union movement. Speaking of the union movement, here is what Robyn Benson of the Public Service Alliance of Canada said on February 11, 2013:

...PSAC has no issue with voting by secret ballot. We do it regularly to elect our officers, ratify collective agreements, and vote for strike action.

What, then, is the problem with voting by secret ballot? Why does the Liberal Party have a problem with secret ballots? I look forward to hearing that. This debate has just begun, and dozens of people will be speaking on this. I would like the Liberals to explain to me why they are against secret ballots. It does not make sense, especially since we were elected to the House of Commons by secret ballot.

They also talk about the need for maintaining balance when it comes to labour relations. A union is formed and dissolved in exactly the same way. A secret ballot is the perfect balance. How can we and the NDP be against that? I know that the members across the way are democrats as well. That is why I say it is never too late to do the right thing and that they can fix this.

Fundamentally, a secret ballot makes the process a lot more credible. We have all heard horror stories about three or four bullies who knock on the door at 10 o'clock on a Sunday night and say sign here or else.

Government Orders

If people are able to vote their conscience in a voting booth and mark an “X” next to the yes or the no and then place their ballot in a box, as they do for so many things, such as electing us for example, then the problem is solved. I cannot wait to hear them explain why a secret ballot is undemocratic.

The other point concerns the issue of transparency. Bill C-377 is driven by this fundamental principle: transparency and accountability. All public bodies have rules requiring transparency and accountability. We MPs have them; departments have them; crown corporations have them; municipalities have them; the provincial and federal governments have them; and so do municipalities. Everyone has to be accountable, even charitable organizations. Then why impede the transparency and accountability of a union, which, need I remind members, is the only organization that taxes people without having the power to tax that belongs to the government?

I will explain. The Rand formula requires union members to accept a deduction from their wages in order to pay the union. We are not challenging this principle. Don't get me wrong on that. I do not want to be misquoted. We agree with this principle. We do not have a problem with that. However, the reality is that these people are accountable because the dues are mandatory.

• (1620)

Youri Chassin, of the Montreal Economic Institute, said that unions had a power to tax, which calls for much more transparency. All Canadians are affected by this, not just working Canadians, not just those who belong to unions, and not just those who are unionized.

This affects all Canadians because there is a tax credit for this. What kind of money are we talking about? We are not just talking about three or four dollars. We are talking about \$500 million, half a billion dollars. Do my colleagues not think that unions should therefore be accountable to all Canadians? That is precisely the question.

Earlier, the minister said that everything was fine and that they are already accountable. That is not true. This affects all Canadians, and since they are paying \$500 million for this tax credit, it makes sense that unions should be accountable to them. That is a fundamental principle. My colleagues agree with this.

I see some members starting to smile. You never know, we might end up convincing them.

The other important thing to remember in all this is that we are not alone. Canada is not an island. This is being done in other places, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, and even France. Yes, even socialist France is doing it.

I am not talking about the Americans under George W. Bush. I am talking about socialist France requiring its unions to have transparency rules. The current minister, a former NDP MLA, cannot disagree with that. We shall see.

I spoke briefly about the requirements for charities. We are MPs and we spend our weekends working with charities. I am very proud of the fact that there are dozens of charitable organizations in my riding of Louis—Saint-Laurent that help the most vulnerable members of our society, whether it be the Knights of Columbus,

Optimist Clubs, support groups, or La Luciole, which I spoke about here in the House last week to great applause from 335 members, including the Prime Minister. I am very proud of that.

Under the principles of transparency and accountability, these organizations must be held to account. Why flout that principle when it comes to unions? That does not make any sense.

As Air Canada flight attendant Marc Roumy said, the union would be stronger and more legitimate and would receive more support if it was more accountable.

Earlier the minister mentioned the theoretical possibility that Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 could face court challenges. Has this been challenged? No, it has not been challenged. She was talking as though it would be the end of the world or things would not end well, but it has not been challenged.

We, however, consulted people, and even a former Supreme Court justice, the Hon. Michel Bastarache, gave evidence. What did he say? He said that this fell under federal jurisdiction because it was a taxation law, that it did not encroach on federal or provincial powers, and that it posed no problems with respect to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The person who said all that was not just anyone; it was a former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. I do hope that the current government respects our right honourable justices of the Supreme Court of Canada. This former justice said that the bill was fine, that it passed the test.

I also have to wonder what the urgency is in all this. The bill was introduced and it passed. It was implemented for a few months. Were there any challenges? Did anyone take this matter to court? I will answer that myself, and the answer is no.

It is clear that the Liberal Party, with the support and assistance of the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, rushed to pass this undemocratic law that is against transparency and accountability solely for partisan reasons and to thank the unions for spending millions of dollars fighting the Conservative Party. That makes no sense in a democracy.

Let us not forget that the biggest losers in all of this are ordinary workers, ordinary union members. The ones who work hard, who have families and who mind their own business and do not want to get involved in union issues and all that. They are the ones hurt by this bill because they will have a harder time getting access to information and there will be no democracy in their system, which we think should include secret ballots.

• (1625)

The government is doing this to thank big union bosses, and it has no respect for ordinary workers.

I am a guy from Quebec. I was a member of the National Assembly, and I can say that the infamous Charbonneau commission showed beyond a shadow of a doubt that unfortunately, unions bent the rules in some highly improper ways.

More transparency and more accountability is always good for democracy, and it is especially good for ordinary workers who pay their union dues.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Let me just say a few words in response to the address by the minister. She said it is quite important to have a real balance on this issue. She said that our government did not have balance on that. That is not true. We share the same balance on that in exactly the same way, to create a union and to dissemble a union in exactly the same way. That is really balanced. Now we are talking about balancing the subject, and we were for that.

The minister is talking about building a strong and robust economy with Bill C-4. We will see. I am not quite sure about this kind of activity, but what is good for the economy of Canada is to support good projects like the pipelines project. Now they should be good for the economy of Canada, not with this bill, but real projects for the private sector that are good for Canada, good for the economy, and good for Canadians.

The minister is talking about obligation and saying that the unions already have an obligation. So what is the deal? They already have an obligation to duplicate it, so what? Paste and copy, it is quite easy. If there is an obligation now, why is she against what we propose, because we share the same principles?

On Bill C-525, she said that it would be more difficult to dissemble a union. If the people, the workers, are happy with their union they will not want to dissemble it, but if they are against their bosses and think they will not be well defended by their leaders, this is an opportunity to do so by secret ballot.

She said that the former government was pro-business. What is the problem? Who creates jobs in this society? Is it the government? No. Is it the municipalities? No. Is it the provincial government? No. Who creates the real jobs? Business. Yes, we are proud to share the same principles.

However, more than that, who works in business? The workers. Men and women work hard. They rise up in the morning, work hard, get their wages, working hard for that, and we thank them for that.

[Translation]

We think of them when we read this bill. We think about the people who get up in the morning, work hard, and see their wages being used to finance unions. They want their money's worth.

We think of them because we think that wealth is created by private businesses, but we also believe that private business exists thanks to the support, assistance, and work of experienced Canadians who get up in the morning and earn their daily bread. We owe them our respect, but the legislation the government is proposing does not respect these workers.

In our opinion, it is clear that this bill cannot stand in its current form. I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for Foothills:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor: "this House decline to give second reading to Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, because the bill violates a fundamental principle of democracy by abolishing the provision whereby the certification and decertification of a bargaining agent must be achieved by a secret ballot vote-based majority".

● (1630)

This bill makes no sense. Let us hope that the government drops it.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments. The hon. member for Hochelaga on a point of order.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like verification that the person who seconded the motion was in his seat. Those are the rules.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will answer the question that was just asked.

The person who moved the motion was present, but was not in his seat. In the meantime, I will check the Standing Orders before making my final decision. The person was in the chamber. The members heard the motion. I will determine whether the Standing Orders apply only to a vote or also when a motion is moved.

[English]

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was not sitting in my seat when you sat down, but I did move to my seat. When you started to read the motion, I was in my seat.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): As I indicated, I will take this under review and will get back to the House.

Before I ask for questions and comments, I do want to remind members that when they are speaking, to try to avoid touching the mic out of respect for the people who are translating. If members could please try to restrain themselves from hitting their desks while they are speaking because it interrupts the ability to translate properly. Keep in mind also that if you are speaking very fast, it also affects the viewers at home who are listening.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

● (1635)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his speech. I know he is new to this chamber, but he is certainly not new to politics. His approach to speaking in the House, obviously he is eloquent, articulate, passionate, and is very much able to put forward an argument no matter how weak the position of his party is. Although it was entertaining too.

The House is about debate, but we want to get to the essence and I know that my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent would want the record clarified on one aspect, and then I want to make another comment and ask a question.

He referred to the fact that the legislation has not been challenged and he would want to know that the Alberta Union of Public Employees has launched a challenge to the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench on the particular legislation, so I know he would want that cleared up for the record.

Government Orders

The comment about banging the desk is because we were pretty animated talking about the big union henchmen and this is something that the Conservative government did in the last Parliament. Conservatives tried to villainize organized labour. Every reference to organized labour was about the big union bosses.

When the member for Red Deer—Lacombe introduced this legislation, he talked about the mountain of grievances against big union bosses. Through testimony we asked the president of the Labour Relations Council, “How many grievances were filed against big union bosses over the last 10 years? The answer was two. There were four against companies, but two against organized labour.

Does he see that as a mountain of grievances? Is that the mountain?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind words. I also noticed his combative style last time. I salute him and all my colleagues. I would like to offer my sincere apologies to the interpreters, because I know that their work is extremely difficult. When I listen to myself, I notice that I speak somewhat quickly, and I will try to correct that. I have tried to do that, but as the saying goes, a leopard cannot change its spots.

[*English*]

I will be very concerned with that. Sorry for sometimes knocking and that stuff. I did that at the National Assembly, too, and I was told to be quiet.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank my colleague for informing me of what is happening in Alberta. I did not know that, and I thank him for setting the record straight. Facts are facts.

However, could the member tell me who illegally gave hundreds of dollars to the Liberal Party in the last election campaign? Who was found guilty of illegal financing? Was it not a union?

We are not against unions. However, as we have always said and as we will continue to repeat, we are first and foremost thinking of the humble union members who work and pay their union dues. We are against the big union bosses who, without consulting their members, spent millions of dollars before the election campaign, circumventing all the responsibilities and the balance prescribed by the Canada Elections Act.

[*English*]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the member that there are also women and mothers who are heads of families, who are union members as well, not just men providing for their families.

The member mentioned union bosses spending millions of dollars without consulting Canadians. I am not sure that the member has ever been a member of a union, but as a 20-year union member, I can assure him that Canadian social democratic unions all have fair democratic processes in place to vote on the direction of their funds. From a local union hall where we vote on spending to our national forums and councils, all decisions are accountable and transparent to our membership.

Organizers of all unions have the right to engage with workers. The overwhelming majority of organizing takes place when the employees call the union because they are suffering under unfair employers.

The member mentioned horror stories. The only horror stories I hear are those of unfair employers exploiting Canadian workers.

Will the member not agree that this was nothing more than the Conservatives' attempt to help the CFIB and their business allies to put more money in their pockets and remove the rights of Canadian workers?

● (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, before I address the substance of the question, I would like to remind members that I mentioned men and women, so yes, I was also talking about mothers who get up in the morning, who work hard, who are required to pay union dues, and who want to get their money's worth.

[*English*]

I have been a union member. I worked for the TQS Network. It shut down seven years ago. It was very tough on all of us. Let me be clear, our union leader worked for us, not for a political purpose. That is the main difference here.

The main difference is that we strongly support unions when it is time to work for the people, for the workers. That is exactly what my union did seven years ago and I praise them. I welcome this kind of question to be clear. We do support unions when they work for union workers instead of political agendas, as they did for the last year against the Conservative Party of Canada.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on an excellent speech. I appreciate his passion for this.

I was very pleased to have Bill C-525 passed. It is not very often we see a private member's bill passed. It is something I thought was going to be a hallmark of change in this country when it came to establishing democracy and democratic rights.

I, too, have been a member of a union. I have also been part of collective bargaining on the other side, sitting across the table. I know exactly who the union leaders are looking out for in these negotiations. In not all cases is it in the best interests of the workers they claim to represent.

My questions for my hon. friend who gave this speech are based on the information we have on the polling information that was conducted. Is there any clear indication as to whether or not actual union workers support the notion of having a mandatory secret ballot?

Second, could the member edify the House on why he thinks, after nine years of Conservative government, a private member's bill was passed?

Government Orders

Third, why, all of a sudden, is one of the first things the Liberal government does is make a move to remove democracy and accountability in this House with one of its first bills?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his question, but first and foremost for the job he has done for democracy in this country with Bill C-525.

Yes, some polls were conducted a few years ago about this issue, in 2013 Leger Marketing in Quebec and also by Nanos in 2011. What was the support for that kind of bill, that kind of democracy? It was 84% and 86%. How many members here have been elected with that score? No one. I could only dream of that. I would have been proud to have had that result. *Je ne fais pas pitié*. I got 51% and a majority of 19,000 votes.

On the other aspect, it is quite important to recognize that the first bill the Conservative government put forward was the clarity bill, the transparency and accountability bill. Throughout the campaign, the Liberals said they want transparency and all that stuff. What was their first bill? A direct attack on democracy, accountability, and also transparency. Shame on them.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments, even though, to some extent, I cannot understand what he is trying to accomplish.

I will ask a simple question. If there are problems with labour and employee relations, could he explain to the House exactly what they are? Before these bills were presented, I did not see any major issues in the relationship between unions and employers in this country, so I wonder what the motivation would be for the previous government to present the bills that it did.

•(1645)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, it is obvious. The purpose of the bills was to strengthen unions' moral authority.

It always pays to have more democracy, more accountability, and more transparency. Making a vote secret improves credibility.

We know what we are talking about. We were all elected by secret ballot.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 Terrebonne, Intergovernmental Relations; and the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona, Canada Post.

[English]

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, that will be a hard act to follow, but I think I will be able to provide the House with some more content, and perhaps clarification on some facts.

I would like to thank the hard-working Canadians in Saskatoon West who voted me to be their voice in the House of Commons. Today especially, I feel it is important that I acknowledge their support, because it is important to remind me of who I am here to serve and why. It is also important that all of us here remember exactly who is affected, positively or negatively, by the decisions we

make each and every day. This is a responsibility I do not take lightly.

Many of the individuals in my riding work part-time or in contract positions. The majority of them work in the retail and hospitality sector. Quite a few of my constituents work in unionized workplaces. Others have been impacted by the slowdown in the resource sector. Some own businesses and have employees of their own. A great number of my constituents are new Canadians, immigrants or refugees, working two or three casual or part-time jobs, trying to balance a family, a new country, a new language, and an unfamiliar culture. Every one of these workers deserves to be protected.

With this in mind, Bill C-4 is beyond partisan politics. It is about the individuals who brought us here and about making things better for the people we all represent. That is why I support the bill. I support it as a person who cares about the rights and well-being of my constituents and my fellow Canadians.

Bill C-4 is a small step forward toward a return to recognizing and respecting the rights of the hard-working individuals, men and women, who make up our country. It is not hard for me as a member of the NDP caucus to acknowledge the support for Bill C-4. I guess it will not come as a surprise to anyone that our party supports the bill.

However, it should come as a surprise to all Canadians that the government is having to, with no small amount of shame I hope, return to the people of Canada their hard-earned rights, their constitutional rights, their right to privacy, their rights of freedom of association, and freedom of speech, rights that took decades to achieve. As such, today is a day of mixed emotions.

On one hand, we are happy to see critical rights restored to hard-working Canadians. On the other hand, we worry about the erosion of workers' rights that took place under the previous government. Today, we ask the current government to be vigilant in restoring each and every one of the rights stolen from the Canadian people. We also ask that it update parts of the Canada Labour Code that are about 60 years out of date.

A great way to help rectify that problem would be to immediately act on the recommendations of the final report of the 2006 review of the labour code. It is long overdue. Many of these recommendations and much-needed updates would benefit the many hard-working Canadians working two or three part-time jobs, trying to support a family and purchase or maintain a home, a home whose affordability is increasingly out of reach of most middle-class Canadians in Canada, let alone for those individuals working multiple jobs at minimum wage.

Government Orders

It is a simple and perhaps obvious truth that it is easier to destroy things than to build them. For anyone who has wrestled with a blank page, a canvas, a drafting table, or a freshly surveyed drilling site knows, creating something new is hard work. It takes time, persistence, and patience, and is not for the faint of heart. Destruction, on the other hand, is something we have been able to accomplish with ease since we were all very young. At the age of one, a child will happily smash, in a matter of seconds, a birthday cake that took his or her parents an hour and a half to create. Over the past decade, we have witnessed more than our fair share of destruction, a destruction far less playful and humorous than the smashing of the cake.

In a few short years, we have seen the dismantling of the rights for each and every individual across the nation, rights that have taken decades to create, nurture, and grow, rights that protect each one of us, but also, and more important, rights that protect the most vulnerable among us.

● (1650)

The previous government, in a few short years, trampled on and set fire to those rights most dear to individual Canadians, and certainly to those individuals who care about the environment, social services, workers' rights, women's rights, the poor and every other marginalized individual and community in this great land; also to those individuals who care about good, honest fiscal management and the economy, and children's education and futures; and especially to those who care about indigenous communities, their languages, cultures and people. These are not and should not be seen as mutually exclusive things. They work together. Each of us is better off by including the other.

Thankfully, today is a new day, and Bill C-4 is a great first step. However, we must do better, be better, and dream much bigger, because we have a lot of ground to make up.

I implore the governing party to be bold, to take the time to recognize respect, and provide rights to individuals who brought them here, because these are individuals who make up our great country. Each of them is a hard-working Canadian.

Today we also know that many Canadians are hurting. Many have lost their jobs and are in danger of, or have already, losing their homes. Many regularly use food banks and emergency shelter that, in some cases, is becoming their everyday shelter. This is unacceptable in a country as great as Canada. We can and must do better.

Bill C-377 was an unnecessary, discriminatory law designed to impose onerous and absurdly detailed reporting requirements on a particular segment, on unions. The bill was pushed through Parliament by the previous government, despite widespread opposition from a wide variety of interests, not just unions. Why? Because the negative effects of the bill would harshly impact each and every Canadian.

Each of these groups and associations represent individuals whose rights they consider important, whether one belongs to a union or not. Some of those individuals and groups were constitutional and privacy experts, for example, the NHL Players Association, provincial governments, Conservative and Liberal senators, the

Privacy Commissioner of Canada, the Canadian Bar Association, and the insurance and mutual fund industry.

Likewise, along with the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, we believe this bill goes against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If not repealed, this bill will be defeated by the courts.

The New Democrats opposed the bill at every stage, because the legislation was as unnecessary as it was irresponsible. It corrupted the very idea of fairness and balance in negotiations between parties and undermined the fundamental right of free collective bargaining. It was a partisan assault on the men and women who went to work every day to provide for their families.

Canada needs a strong and healthy trade union movement. Historically speaking, unions in Canada have done much, not only for their members, but for Canadian society as a whole. When unions are weakened, all working people feel it. Why? Because, contrary to the rhetoric of those threatened by workers' associations, namely the wealthy 1% and a few misguided Conservatives, attacks on collective bargaining do not promote economic growth. Attacks like these promote inequality, not a healthy economy.

In 2002, documents based on more than 1,000 studies of the impact of unions on domestic economies, the World Bank found that a high rate of unionization led to greater income equality, lower unemployment and inflation, higher productivity, and a quicker response to economic downturns. A quick response to an economic downturn seems like it might be a positive thing right about now.

The previous government claimed at the time that it was acting in the name of transparency, but the Conservatives failed to mention that unions were already required to make their financial information available to their members. The bill is an unnecessary redundancy solving a non-existent problem.

Something we have not heard yet is that the bill would cost taxpayers a great deal of money to achieve absolutely nothing.

● (1655)

The parliamentary budget officer estimated that it would cost much more than the \$2.4 million allocated by the CRA to do this level of monitoring. In fact, it was estimated that Bill C-377 would cost the Canada Revenue Agency approximately \$21 million to establish the electronic database over the first two years, and approximately \$2.1 million per year for subsequent years. Many estimates were even much higher than that. I am being conservative.

As such, implementing the requirements in this bill will be ridiculously expensive for what is clearly redundant and unnecessary harassment. Repealing Bill C-377 would save millions of dollars annually, both for government and for unions, money that could be much better spent creating jobs rather than stifling them. In short, this bill should never have seen the light of day, and repealing it is just common sense.

Government Orders

Similarly, Bill C-525 was a private member's bill supported by the previous government. The bill was designed to make it harder for workers to unionize, and easier for unions to be decertified. Once again, the previous government was solving a non-existent problem.

Bill C-525 attacks the fundamental right of association by making certification of new worker associations or unions much more difficult and the decertification of existing unions much easier. The labour law changes were made despite there being zero evidence of a problem with the previous system of union certification.

A union, like any other type of association, such as the Association of Information Technology Professionals or the Canadian Society for Civil Engineers, exists to provide support and a voice for its members. What right does a government have to meddle in the daily management of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, for example? None. Therefore, why should the government meddle in daily management of a worker association or union? On the surface, it just seems silly.

It seems a government should have much more important things to accomplish with its time, its budget, and its efforts. However, the efforts of such destructive meddling are much more nefarious than a bizarrely childish obsessiveness with union busting, and these effects have a negative impact on all Canadians. Whether a person supports unions or not, the fact is unions have been a driving force in ensuring all hard-working Canadians, whether unionized or not, receive a basic level of rights, freedoms, and protections.

The health of Canadian unions is at the heart of the health of Canadian workers' rights for each and every working Canadian. Moreover, as mentioned previously, the organized association of working people is important to Canadians and the economy. Higher wages negotiated by unions improve the lives of everyday Canadians and inject an additional \$786 million into the Canadian economy each week. Standing in the way of the well-being of hard-working Canadians is bad policy, bad governance, bad fiscal management, and bad for the economy.

As such, the NDP and Canadian unions are pleased that the federal government has tabled legislation to repeal the controversial bills, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

The CLC president, Hassan Yussuff said:

...these bills were nothing more than an attempt to undermine unions' ability to do important work like protecting jobs, promoting health and safety in the workplace, and advocating on behalf of all Canadian workers.

Mark Hancock, the national president of CUPE, confirmed, saying:

This is good news for all Canadian workers. These bills were nothing more than political attacks on unions and we are happy that the new government is moving quickly to correct these wrongs...This is a good step in re-establishing a sense of respect for unions, the democratic voice of working people.

Likewise, Paul Meinema, the national president of UFCW, said:

UFCW is pleased to see the government tabling Bill C-4. Our union campaigned vigorously against the Conservative Government's Bill C-377 in the last parliament. The bill was undemocratic, and part of the Conservative government's campaign against workers and workplace democracy. It was also a major invasion of the privacy of individual union members and it infringed on provincial jurisdiction over labour issues. Repealing Bill C-377 is positive for all Canadians as this bill would have been expensive for the government to implement and monitor.

• (1700)

The NDP will continue to push the government to restore and enhance collective bargaining rights as well as fair working conditions for all Canadians. The NDP will continue to pressure the government to reinstate a federal minimum wage and to enact anti-scab and proactive pay equity legislation. Likewise, the NDP will push the government to repeal the previous government's dangerous legislation, just to confuse things also called Bill C-4. Larry Rousseau, in a 2013 article published by *The Huffington Post*, called the previous Bill C-4 explosive, claiming the bill turned back the clock almost 50 years. A bill this backward, overtly ideological and explosive needs to be repealed, not just reviewed.

What value does a bill limiting a person's right to refuse unsafe work bring to the table? What exactly needs to be reviewed in a bill that does away with independent health and safety officers and that prevents federal public service workers from accessing the Canadian Human Rights Commission and tribunal over workplace discrimination and complaints? A review legitimizes this offensive legislation. It is time to just repeal it.

Having fought hard against these unnecessary and irresponsible bills, the NDP welcomes the changes tabled by the current government. The rights of working people have been under attack for far too long and the repeal of these bills is a good first step, but there is so much more to do for workers' rights and working conditions for Canadian men and women.

The NDP will push the government to restore good faith bargaining with our public sector workers. We will push the government to reinstate a federal minimum wage and ensure that workers have fair and independent health and safety protections. We will push the government to adopt anti-scab and pay equity legislation, because all Canadian workers deserve fairness and respect.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we go to questions and comments, I do want to go back to the question that was asked on the amendment by the member for Hochelaga who happens to be the whip of the second opposition party. I can indicate that on June 8, 1999, Acting Speaker McClelland was seized with a similar question with respect to the seconder of the motion not being in his seat. At that time the Acting Speaker declared that the member needs only to be in the House. Therefore, the amendment was in order and accepted. Therefore, the motion that has been tabled is in order and is accepted by this Speaker.

Resuming debate.

Government Orders

•(1705)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, at times there are speeches in this place that are passionate but are also bordering on absurd. I heard terms in the member's speech of "destruction", "dismantling of rights", but she did not go into the specifics of the content of those bills.

Bill C-525 is a secret ballot. Is that a destructive right? Canadians have enjoyed that since 1874. That is a right.

The second bill, Bill C-377, deals with disclosure. The Access to Information Act was brought to the House in 1983 by Pierre Trudeau. The member's province had the same legislation in 1991. Politicians on all levels expect, and it is on my website, if people pay taxes or anything by compulsion like union dues, they should be able to know easily where it goes. This goes for charities. The member used to run the United Way. I can check what it spent online. These are reasonable measures and it is 2016.

Why is the only section of Canadian society that is resisting disclosure the labour movement?

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, there are some things I would like to clarify; specifically, around the fact that there are many organizations, private organizations, for-profit organizations, which receive government credit, government grants, which do not have the same type of reporting requirements that this bill was requesting of unions. We are going to disagree about this, obviously. That is the reason we say, and rightfully so, it was an attack on a particular group, and it did go in line with all the other attacks on all the other groups, including charities. The previous government worked behind the scenes in order to have audits done on those charities that disagreed with it. That is why I made the comment that we need to look at this in its totality.

The other thing I would like to mention is that although the member likes to talk about a secret vote as being sort of principle of Bill C-525, he needs to know that in that bill one of the secret votes was if a person was not there, somehow it secretly voted for him or her that he or she was against certification of the union. The fact that a person was not there and did not vote, it was a secret to him or her that he or she had voted "no". It was just absurd.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that was a very good speech because it talked a lot about labour, organized labour, the importance of organized labour in our society, and the role of organized labour in the balance of rights of workers and, of course, the rights of employers to make a good living and those workers, those blue-collar workers, to make a good living.

I would like to ask a couple of questions of the member because I think it is important to get this on the record.

Why is it that the Conservatives, and especially the member from Quebec, who does not believe that the federal government should enter into provincial jurisdiction, generally speaking, have chosen to use the Income Tax Act to bypass provincial laws and legislation relating to the labour movement? It is their jurisdiction.

I do not, for the life of me, understand why the Conservatives are even messing around in provincial jurisdiction when it is a province's right to deal with the labour movement, the collective agreements,

and organized labour in its particular province or territory. I ask that question of the member.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, members can tell from my comments that I think it was a way to go through a back door in order to put labour legislation into place that would be detrimental to unions and detrimental to working people. I think the previous government just hoped that somehow it would happen and no one would challenge it constitutionally.

However, what we know from what we have heard from communities and from what we have heard during committee is that it was not the right way to go, and that provinces have that jurisdiction.

Why go that way? I think it is because there was an anti-worker, anti-union philosophy on value of that previous government.

•(1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, first I would like to congratulate my new colleague on her speech, which was very calm and provided a lot of information about how important the labour movement is and the work she has done in that area.

I could not help but notice how carefully she explained the reasons for her beliefs. Her speech was certainly less dramatic than the big show put on by the new Conservative recruit, who swooped in and made it look like the Conservatives' word was gospel and there were no problems with labour organizations, when the previous government attacked workers for years. Take, for example, the Fonds de solidarité FTQ tax credit; Aveos, which it hung out to dry; and the Canada Post lockout.

Honestly, it does not take a saintly, miracle-working government to want to remedy this situation.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, I am not quite sure what I can add to that, except to say that I do want to reflect to this House and to others that I have a deep value of the importance of protecting people's rights and the rights of workers and the rights of workers to join unions, to work with their colleagues to make life better.

I think we need to be reminded, in this House, that many of us are able to enjoy things like maternity leave, weekends, and the ability to share work, because a union went on strike, vulnerable people who had nothing, to say this was important to them.

That is why I am standing up to today to support the bill. It is a good first step. We need to go further, as I mentioned in my comments.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member if she would comment on the historical way that Parliament has, over generations, dealt with labour legislation.

Government Orders

Those of us who have been around the labour movement for many years know that in the federal jurisdiction, here in this place, governments, both Conservative and Liberal, have always had a tripartite working group process that allowed the labour department to sit down with organized labour, all of the different unions and all of the different employers in the federal family, to look at the Canada Labour Code. If changes were necessary because times had changed, they would go through the process of putting a tripartite committee together and then, following the discussions, provide a report to the minister of labour to look at different changes to the Labour Code.

Why is it that the previous government refused to do that and, instead, took the backdoor route of using a private member's bill to get through this process?

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, in my comments, I spoke of the good work that was done in that tripartite arrangement for reviewing the Labour Code and the recommendations put forward by all parties involved in order to look at how we can modernize the Canada Labour Code, which had not been looked at prior to that for over 60 years.

My view is that the previous government did not believe in that type of working together to find common solutions that took the needs of both groups to find common ground. At times, the NDP has supported important bills like this one, to say that we are prepared to move forward together, that we will challenge the new government on things we feel need to go further. That is the kind of negotiation and working together required, where everyone's views are brought to the table to find the best possible solution. Ultimately, we are talking about the lives of many working men and women in Canada, who need us to work on their behalf and with them.

• (1715)

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to stand here in my place to speak to Bill C-4. Before I do that, I just want to say that I will be splitting my time with the member for Davenport.

I want to start off by talking a little about my background, because I think it is important for the members to know that I am one of those union bosses the members opposite are talking about. I am one of those people who was high up in the union movement in the 1980s, and the 1970s for that matter, before I became a member of Parliament. I must be the one they are targeting who was not accountable and not transparent and had something to hide and that they were trying to fix in the pieces of legislation we are speaking to.

I wanted to come clean right off the bat that I have a particular bias. I am a labour unionist and am very proud of it. This country has a long history with the organized labour movement. It has done well in making those kinds of changes.

Let us talk a little about the history of the labour movement. It is pretty clear that the labour movement has had huge impacts on blue-collar workers and workers in Canada. Part of that is obviously better wages, better working hours, and better health and safety, which is one of the main reasons unions started in the first place. Workers were under very severe pressure to work in unsafe conditions in the early part of our history. The labour movement was started because of the lack of protection for the everyday man and woman working in Canada.

I want to share with members the race to the bottom the Conservative Party, and the Reform Party before it, have been bringing to the House for the last 20 years I have been involved. It scares me. I will use the example of the Canada pension plan and pensions in general.

The labour movement had a huge role to play in bringing pensions, good pensions, to men and women all across the country to supplement their retirement incomes, because obviously, we know that the Government of Canada cannot look after all our seniors after retirement. The pension plans, the funding put in by employers and employees, are very important in our economy today.

We not only need to talk about the collective bargaining structure but about the social aspects of what collective bargaining and organized labour can do.

I just want to talk a little about a 2012 study, by the Boston Consulting Group, I have been reading about. Here is what I found out. On average, 14 cents of every dollar of income in Ontario communities comes from pensions. That means that in Ontario, 7% of all income in our towns and cities, or \$27 billion, is derived from defined benefit pensions.

Instead of trying to diminish labour, we should in fact be trying to strengthen our relationship with employers and employees so that there are more pensions in the workplace so that pensioners, the people we represent in the House, have a good retirement.

I am proud to represent retired railroaders, mill workers, and miners, all these people in the Kenora—Rainy River district, and now the Kenora riding, that I have been a member of Parliament for the past 16 years. These people have good pensions. Those workers were represented by organized labour. They had huge benefits because of good collective bargaining.

That does not mean that the employers did not make money. I was a railroader. I represented the railway unions. Those railways made money in the days when I was there negotiating collective bargaining agreements with them.

The fact that the previous government felt that it was in its best interest to try to diminish organized labour makes me wonder what the motive really was. In fact, it does more harm to Canada than it does good. We should be strengthening the opportunity for organized labour to work with the government and with employers, instead of the reverse.

• (1720)

The previous government set a very dangerous precedent. The balance between labour and employers has always been hard to arrive at. We have spent, I would bet, 100 years trying to get the balance right provincially, federally, and even municipally. Then we had a private member's bill foisted on us, without any discussion among the key players—labour, government, and employers—through the tripartite process that has been ongoing at the department of labour federally for as long as I can remember. That is a very dangerous precedent by any government.

Government Orders

Even Brian Mulroney's government would not have done something like that. I was involved in those days in opposition when Brian Mulroney's government wanted to bring some changes to the Canada Labour Code. It used the tripartite process.

The Conservative Party, and I think there are too many Reformers in there still, really needs to start thinking about what exactly its intent was in getting involved in provincial jurisdiction, which has nothing to do with the federal government, and using the Income Tax Act to do so.

That is exactly why the current government is repealing those pieces of legislation. First, this is not our jurisdiction. Second, they are unconstitutional. We all know that, and we know that if we do not do anything, the courts will throw them out, like it did many pieces of legislation the Conservative government brought it.

We are doing the right thing. We are putting in place the balance. The balance is always difficult to achieve. Yes, sometimes workers go on strike. They have to have the ability to do that. They have to have the ability to certify. They have to be able to do it without everyone in the world knowing their strategy and their plan. It is pretty hard to negotiate with both hands tied behind one's back. What the Conservative government proposed to do under that legislation was to have the union tell the employer, on the other side, all its financial resources, who it was speaking to, and what it was proposing to do.

If a union is putting money into social issues or into campaigns, that is its prerogative. I can say this because I was there at the top end of the union: union members know where their money is spent. It is ridiculous for any party to be suggesting to the average Canadian that somehow workers do not know where their dues go. We all know that this is just a fabrication to make it sound like it has to be done.

These two pieces of legislation destabilized that very careful balance that we in Canada, as legislators, tried for many years to make sure stayed intact. The legislation we are proposing to repeal will be repealed because we want to make sure that the relationship between labour and the government and employers is respected and that collective bargaining will be done in the way it has always been done, between the employer and the unions. They will work it out. That is what the legislation is intended to do for Canadian workers and their employers.

I want to speak a little about the importance of our new government's relationship not just with labour but with the Canadian people. Over the next couple of months in this place, we are going to see the government probably remove a number of pieces of legislation the other side brought in that we think are counter-productive to building a good society. I hope that we on this side of the House never feel that we have to find an excuse for not be doing that. We ran on a platform of not allowing those kinds of things to happen anymore. We are going to have respect for the labour movement. We are going to have respect for Canadians. That is what we are going to do.

• (1725)

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would first like to correct the record, and I want to be very clear. I would encourage the member opposite to speak to Jerry Dias,

Hassan Yussuff, or numerous other union leaders in this country about how Labour Canada and I, as the minister of labour, conducted ourselves in tripartite relationships.

Bill C-525, a number of changes that were placed in the Canada Labour Code of late, and new legislation put forward to make sure that interns are protected in the workplace were all done under a tripartite relationship that was respected. It was one that I would encourage the member opposite to speak to Mr. Dias or Hassan Yussuff about, because they participated in making sure that it was appropriate.

I think it is extremely important that the Canadian public understand that this side of the House respects all workers. For me, that was exceptionally important, and I do take offence at the member opposite intimating that this was not the case.

What I would like to ask the member opposite, with respect to this, is this: If he believes that nothing was done in a tripartite way, did he actually check that on the record? Has he done that numerous times?

Also, does the member have comments with respect to those issues related to secret ballot voting, like in Bill C-525, which many of the members of my riding have come forward with? They say that it is what they would like, just like the secret ballot when one casts a ballot in Canada's democracy.

Hon. Robert Nault: Madam Speaker, it is quite interesting that the member, who was the minister of labour, stands up in this place and defends her time as the minister of labour but at the same time does not tell us why she went through the back door with a piece of legislation in a private member's bill. Why not use the regular process and show a little courage and have a real debate about the Canada Labour Code and the ramifications of the process? If there was a discussion about this process, then there obviously would have been a bill sponsored by the minister of labour, not a private member's bill.

I do not know exactly what the member is talking about, but I will tell members that the previous government had a bad habit of picking enemies and making everyone who did not agree with it an enemy of the state. I think the Conservatives decided that organized labour was an enemy of the state, like scientists, environmentalists, and anyone who disagreed with their platform. In the last election, I think people spoke about their involvement with labour, and they disagreed with everything the Conservatives were doing.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kenora for his good words about the role of unions and on extending defined benefit pension coverage. Another way of extending defined benefit pension coverage would be by expanding the Canada pension plan.

It took three ghosts to scare and convince Ebenezer Scrooge, but just before Christmas, the Minister of Finance met with the provinces, and he was scared away by only two ghosts: Brad Wall and Christy Clark.

I wonder if the member for Kenora could perhaps talk some sense to the Minister of Finance and convince him to proceed with an expansion of the Canadian pension plan.

Government Orders

Hon. Robert Nault: Madam Speaker, I can tell the member that this side of the House agrees and understands that the Canada pension plan needs some serious change and work.

The Minister of Finance, we are quite convinced, is working with his colleagues for one simple reason: to try to make those changes. Thanks to the previous government and its leader, I went door to door for 11 straight months. That is not true. I started about six months before that. Everyone we talked to on the hustings, every pensioner who only had the Canada pension to rely on, said that the previous government let Canadians down by doing nothing with the Canada pension plan.

On this side, we will make sure that we correct that, even if it takes us a little while to do it.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will follow the wonderful example of the hon. member for Kenora and start by giving members a bit about my background and some context.

I first want to mention that before I became an MP, I was privileged to work as a director of a large corporation. I worked for big business and was very proud to do so.

I also come from a family where my father worked for Canada Post for almost 30 years and was part of the union there. The only reason my mother does not live in poverty at the moment is that we very much benefit from his ongoing pension. The reason I mention this is that I believe we should treat all of our partners in the economy in a fair and balanced way, whether big business or unions. This is very much the principle that is behind the bill that I will be speaking to today, Bill C-4.

I am the very proud member of Parliament for Davenport, which is a riding in downtown west Toronto. We have a number of union members there, whether in the construction and labour trades, such as LiUNA painters, carpenters, or from the public sector or Canada Post. There are many other unions that I have not mentioned. However, the point I want to make is that Davenport has a lot of union members who want a fair and balanced federal labour policy, as do all Canadians. That is what we are trying to do with Bill C-4.

I welcome the opportunity to speak in support of Bill C-4, which aims to repeal the legislative changes made by Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. I would also invite all members of the House to support this important bill.

As mentioned in my introduction, in the broadest of strokes, Bill C-4 aims to restore a fair and balanced approach to labour relations in Canada. Because this government has promised Canadians that we will do things differently from the start, the words “fairness” and “balance” resonate with me. We believe that how we do things is just as important as what we do. The laws that throw a wrench into positive working relationships between government and unions, between employers and employees, and between different levels of government do not help anyone. Negative and contentious labour relations are destructive. They gnaw away at the foundation of a structure until it can no longer stand. However, it is that structure that supports workers, employers, and our economy as a whole. Therefore, we need that structure to be strong.

My colleague the Minister of Labour has taken members through some of the finer points of Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. I would like to use my time today to explain the impact these bills have on unions and workers and how they and in turn all Canadians would benefit from the repeal of the legislative changes made by Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

I will begin by commenting on Bill C-377. Members should consider the fact that this bill forces labour organizations and labour trusts to provide very detailed financial and other information to the Canada Revenue Agency, such as salaries and time spent working on political or lobbying activities.

The bill also requires disclosure of all disbursements greater than \$5,000 by unions, including names and addresses of anyone whose goods or services are purchased. There are a lot of other data requirements, which I will not go into. However, the key point is that the bill requires information that no other organization is required to provide, be it a public, private, non-profit, or charitable organization, or even a political party. To some this may not seem entirely unreasonable at first glance. However, if we dig a little deeper we would find that it could have serious and substantial ramifications.

First, it creates an extra level of unnecessary red tape, which could be particularly problematic for smaller organizations with fewer resources at their disposal. The Canada Revenue Agency would share that burden. It would have to develop new and expensive IT systems and other administrative systems to implement the bill. That is an unnecessary cost that would fall to Canadians. It is unnecessary because we already have legislation in place to ensure that unions are financially accountable to their members, as we heard today during the earlier debate. All of this is referred to in the Canada Labour Code.

• (1730)

Furthermore, similar accountability measures have been put in place by almost every province. Bill C-377 would impose a large financial and administrative burden on labour organizations, labour trusts, and government bodies, among others, for information that is not required from other organizations. As though that were not enough, if these organizations do not report on time, they must pay a fine of \$1,000 for every day they are late, up to a maximum of \$25,000.

Fortunately, my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, took all the necessary steps to waive reporting for the time being. However, we know that this is a temporary solution since the waiver only applies to the 2016 fiscal period. In addition to the administrative burden being significant and unjust overall, the effect that the reporting requirements would have on the collective bargaining process would also give an unfair advantage to employers at the bargaining table. For example, detailed information about union strike funds would be available to employers, which means that employers would be able to calculate how long union members might be able to stay off the job in a labour dispute. If that is not uneven footing, I do not know what is.

Government Orders

It is clear that Bill C-377 is unnecessary and discriminatory. It clearly disadvantages unions during the collective bargaining process. At the root of it, I believe it is an attempt to make things harder for unions and to drive a wedge between employer and employee relations in Canada.

This brings me to Bill C-525. This bill made changes to the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, and the Public Service Labour Relations Act that affect how unions are certified and decertified. It makes it harder for unions to be certified as collective bargaining agents and easier for a bargaining agent to be decertified. The changes mean the process is more susceptible to employer interference and makes unionization more difficult.

Bill C-525 is not just problematic for unions but imposes some serious burdens on others as well. For example, there are real implications for bodies such as the Canada Industrial Relations Board, as well as the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board. Both boards are responsible for the full cost and logistical responsibilities involved in holding representation votes. Under these changes, the Canada Industrial Relations Board would be required to hold a vote to certify a union not just when less than a majority of workers have signed union cards, but would need to do so in all cases. This would mean a fivefold increase in the board's workload.

These bills do not represent a positive contribution to labour relations in Canada. In fact, they cause real harm. It is no surprise that when policies are developed without proper consultation, as was the case with both of these bills, they often end up causing more harm than good. Liberals believe in reforming labour policies through meaningful engagement with unions, employers, stakeholders, provinces and territories, and the Canadian public. It is the only way to ensure a fair and balanced approach to labour relations in Canada. As we have said before, sound labour relations are essential for protecting the rights of Canadian workers and helping the middle class grow and prosper. It is also the necessary foundation of a system where both employers and unions play valuable roles in ensuring that workers receive decent wages and are treated fairly.

I urge all of my colleagues in the House to support Bill C-4 and bring back the fair and balanced labour relations approach all Canadians want and deserve.

• (1735)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would mention that another way of improving wages and living conditions is through a strong minimum-wage policy. Unfortunately, a previous Liberal government removed the federal minimum wage in 1996. When this issue came up in the last Parliament, the Liberals voted in favour of reinstating the federal minimum wage. During the election, they cast some doubt on that idea.

I am wondering if the member for Davenport could clarify whether her government will do the right thing and reinstate a federal minimum wage.

• (1740)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I will be speaking to Bill C-4 today. The Government of Canada believes that we should be treating our unions in a fair and balanced way. This is the principle

behind repealing Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. The other reason we are also repealing this is the whole process. If there are issues around workers or unions or just human resource policy in Canada, the best way for us to go about dealing with it is in an open, transparent, and consultative way.

To me, that is the way we should be dealing with any of the issues, both now and moving forward.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the Liberal Party, which always talks about empowering the backbenchers, would be so anti-backbench, anti-private members' bills that the previous Parliament passed. It is as though there were something sinister about private members' business in this House. The fact of the matter is, two private members' bills were passed that had support of union members across the country.

I find it fascinating that a party that would tout the benefits of backbenchers and private members' business would then degrade two private members' bills that go to help union members across the country improve transparency.

There is nothing wrong with private members' business. This party had the most bills passed in a generation under private members' business.

Will the hon. member comment on why she sees such a negative connotation with private members' business?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, part of the reason we are repealing this bill is that we believe that there was a huge issue around the process.

The bill was highly discriminatory and deeply ideological. For it to go through a normal process, it has to be open, transparent, and consultative. The process of a private member's bill did not allow for the intensity of dialogue in consultation with the broad array of stakeholders, as if we went through a normal process.

That is why we are repealing both Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to the hon. member's point about all the private members' bills that were adopted in the last Parliament, I do not know if he is aware that most of those private members' bills were government bills dressed up as private members' bills, and the government used its majority to get them through. That is why so many were passed.

I think it is quite clear that the previous government was trying to weaken the labour movement. We all agree on that. The question is why was it doing that. If we asked members on the other side, they would say because it would solve problems, it would solve economic problems and solve other problems.

Government Orders

Does the hon. member think that the problems we are having with the economy today are a result of the fact that we have unions, or are there other reasons we are in an economic slowdown?

On the social side, by getting rid of unions, would we have better education? Would we have better health care?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, we very much believe that for Canada to have a strong middle class and a strong economy, we need to have a strong labour movement. We believe that unions play an important role in protecting the rights of Canadian workers and helping unionized workers to access benefits and pensions in addition to what I have just mentioned, helping the middle class grow and prosper.

This is why we are very much committing to repealing Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in my place to speak to this today. I will be splitting my time with the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

First, I want to thank everyone in the previous Parliament who passed my private member's Bill C-525. I am very disappointed at how this debate has been framed by members in the Liberal Party, the NDP, and others.

My bill is not an anti-union bill. It has been long established that unions have the right to exist and that Canadians have a charter right to associate and affiliate with one another. That is not what is in question here.

My bill is not anti-union. My bill is pro-democracy, and it worked in part with Bill C-377, which is pro-transparency. Those were the issues.

My bill came about as a result of consultations with my constituents. Every time we hear a Liberal MP or an NDP MP talk about consultations, the only people they are talking to are union leaders, or big business.

The Conservative Party actually talks to everyday ordinary Canadians. We know we are on the right side on this issue. We know we are right because polling information clearly indicates where Canadians are and where workers are, in particular where union workers are on this issue.

I already have had a number of calls from constituents and card carrying union members who are disappointed that it is a priority of the Liberal government to undo what we were able to do in the last Parliament, which was bestow a mandatory secret ballot in the process of certifying or decertifying a union.

How can it be called democracy if we take away the right to a secret ballot? It has been established long ago that the hallmark of any modern democracy is a secret ballot vote. Would members of Parliament feel that they were here legitimately if they were able to go door knocking and stand on people's doorsteps, make their pitch and say that they happened to have a ballot in their hands, and a couple of their friends with them, and encourage people to sign those ballots and vote for them? That is exactly what the card check process is.

I have been a member of a union, and my union served me well in times when I needed it. However, I was also in the hall where I heard my union representatives use these kinds of tactics, tactics that we hear of all the time, threats and intimidation, boisterousness, the louder they spoke, the more forceful their point was. It does not matter how right they were, it just mattered how loud they were. It was not necessary. I did not need to be convinced. I was going to support whatever we decided to do as a group. I did not need to be intimidated or beat into line on these issues.

I have also sat across the table as a municipal councillor negotiating on behalf of taxpayers for a public union. I saw through those secret negotiations, much like the ones the NDP always claimed, when we were doing trade negotiations. Every negotiation was done this way. I never heard an NDP member of Parliament say that union negotiations should be done in front of the entire world for everybody to see. Those members think TPP should be done that way, but they do not think a union negotiation should be done that way.

Notwithstanding that hypocrisy, I have been there. I have seen who was looking after who in these negotiations. I saw union leaders ensure that whatever the contract was, if it started to go bad for the union people, the people at the very top, the people with the seniority, not the new people, not the new workers, not the most vulnerable workers in the union, the ones who had the least seniority, but the ones who had the most seniority, the people with the most seniority looked after themselves. They were the ones who rose up to the top of the union leadership. The ones with the least seniority were vulnerable. Whatever negotiations happened, the people at the top made sure they took care of themselves first.

Where would that union member's right be to hold his or her union leaders to account if they were not actually representing even a junior member of the union to the best of their ability? There was no way because there was no mandatory secret ballot vote to determine who would represent those people at the collective bargaining table. This is absolutely fundamental.

● (1745)

We hear the other side complaining about a number of these issues, that Bill C-525 is anti-union, that it is creating disparity. Bill C-525 actually created the same process for creating a union as decertifying a union. Yet, the minister right now claims that they are going back to a more balanced approach. In her opinion, a more balanced approach would make it far easier for a union to be created and far harder for a union to be decertified. If it is the same way going in as it is going out, I do not understand how that tips the scales. That makes the scales level.

As a union leader, would a person not want to have his or her presence as a collective bargaining agent on behalf of the employees ratified by a secret ballot vote? Would he or she not like to carry that forward in confidence, knowing full well that he or she has 50% plus one of the membership of the union supporting him or her to negotiate a deal that is in their best interests?

The way it worked before my bill was passed was with a card check system. That is fine. A card check system is still used. It is just used to determine the threshold for when a vote should be called. That is fine. We must have some way of gauging interest.

Government Orders

However, we can do a card check under any guise. We can take a card to someone who is neither fluent in English nor French and tell them that they needed to sign this card to receive their pay and benefits. So, they sign a card. They do not know what they are signing. All of a sudden, there is 50% plus one of the members of the union. It was automatic. It is 50% plus one. It was automatic.

Is this not problematic? Does anyone not see an issue with this? It was open to abuse. It was open to intimidation.

What is wrong with a secret ballot?

I do not know whom the members in the Liberal Party consulted. They had closed-door meetings shortly after the election, but every union leader who came before the human resources committee during the deliberations on Bill C-525 had nothing but good things to say about the secret ballot.

The Christian Labour Association of Canada said that “CLAC supports efforts to...strengthen the democratic rights of workers” and stated that it looked forward to further speaking to the legislation when the Senate dealt with it. The CLAC representative repeated, “Yes, we are in favour of secret ballots.” That is a union leader who said that.

Robyn Benson of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the largest public service union in Canada, said:

Contrary to what you may have heard, PSAC has no issue with voting by secret ballot. We do it regularly to elect our officers, ratify collective agreements, and vote for strike actions, as examples.

Really? Robyn Benson said that in front of the committee. What is the problem? What is the issue? They want to be legitimized. They want to have that process legitimized.

FETCO also agreed with it. Mr. Farrell from FETCO said:

I believe the major disadvantage is that there's no clear evidence that all of the potential union members have had an opportunity to seriously consider the question of a unionization and to express their opinion behind the screen of a ballot box in a secret ballot vote.

What Mr. Farrell was actually saying and responding to there was a question that is very fundamental. If they do a card check system they actually would not even have to check with all the members of the bargaining unit. They could just go until they got 50% plus one, wipe their hands, call it a day. They did not even check with everyone. People can show up the next day at work never knowing that a union drive had even taken place and be an automatic member of the union.

How is that fair? How is that a democratic process? People do not even have an opportunity to discuss it.

I have a lot more examples. There are numerous polls by Leger and Nanos and ask the question, “Should Canadians have the right to a secret ballot before they decide to join a union or not? What is their best interest?” In every case, as confirmed by the testimony of union leaders themselves, Canadians overwhelmingly, over 70%, and sometimes over 80%, say, “Yes, this is true”. And when they asked an actual union member of someone who was in a union, that number even got higher, sometimes up into the high 80s percentages.

It makes absolutely no sense. There is not a problem here that needs to be undone, contrary to what these folks over there want Canadians to believe.

We on this side of the House, the Conservative Party, and only the Conservative Party, stand up for transparency and for accountability for workers.

If anyone in Canada has any doubts who is on the side of the everyday working man and woman in this country, it is Conservative members of Parliament.

• (1750)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member attempts to be compelling in terms of his argument, but let me make a suggestion. Government has a responsibility to promote and encourage harmony and a sense of consensus related to labour relations between big business and unions, and all the different associated stakeholders. That is why we have a process that receives advice and opinions in the formation of legislation that has an impact that could take away from that harmony.

The member might want to crow about his private member's bill, but it was a private member's bill as opposed to a government piece of legislation that would have gone through a process of consultation and working with a wide number of stakeholders that are necessary in order to encourage and promote that harmony.

Why does the member believe the former Conservative government went against good practices of labour relations in adopting and bringing forward legislation and instead took it upon itself to cause mischief when it was just not called for?

• (1755)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, remember the part of my speech when I said that if you yell louder, you are somehow going to make your point better? The member who just asked me the question is a pro at this.

It was my bill. I brought it forward. I am a member of Parliament. I do not have the vast resources of government to engage. My job is to represent my constituents and I brought the bill forward on behalf of my constituents who had concerns about how they were being represented by their union.

I cannot interfere with what unions do, but I can at least put an accountability mechanism in on behalf of my constituents that would allow them to make this choice free from the prying eyes of both their employer and their union representatives.

While the member wants to go after and repeal secret ballots, he is doing it through secret meetings. We all know from the articles that appear in the media that the Prime Minister and a number of senior Liberals, I can only imagine, have met behind closed doors with union leaders who say one thing in that meeting and say another thing when they are testifying at committee in front of all Canadians. We know that union donations played a factor in the last election campaign on behalf of the Liberal Party.

Government Orders

No one on this side of the House, at least myself, is surprised that the Liberals can be bought. I am just surprised at how cheaply they let themselves go for.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Red Deer—Lacombe cited the Christian Labour Association of Canada, which is probably one of the more pro-employer labour organizations in the country. Would he acknowledge that even the Christian Labour Association of Canada said that Bill C-377 is too flawed to become law?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does not seem to appreciate the fact that I am talking about my private member's Bill C-525. Bill C-377 was a transparency mechanism that was brought in by one of my colleagues. He would be better served asking my colleague about that, but I support the notion of transparency.

Taxpayers subsidize union dues being paid to the tune of \$500 million a year. That is exactly the budget of running the entire Parliament and democracy of our country. That is a lot of money and union members have a right to know where that money is being spent.

I do not think there was anything wrong with a \$5,000 threshold. It is a mandatory tax if one is a union member. Union members have to pay it. That is the deal and that is fine. I do not disagree with that deal. I think union members ought to know where it goes.

After all our celebrations on democratic rights for women getting the right to vote in Manitoba, and references to Irene Parlby, one of the Famous Five, who is from my riding and came from Alix, Alberta, is the hon. member going to wear as a badge of honour the fact that when he passes this legislation proposed by the Liberals, he is going to take away the right to vote of every woman worker in this country?

That is the badge that he and the Liberal Party are going to wear because every woman, who is part of a union or not part of a union, has just lost the right to vote. I would be ashamed of that record.

● (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill C-4, as I find it proposes some deeply troubling measures.

I will get directly to the point. Last night, I took the time to research the history of the right to a private ballot in a democracy. It will likely come as no surprise to this House that prior to secret ballots, citizens were often subject to threats and intimidation, but of course that is the entire point here, is it not?

We know that big, powerful unions supported the Liberal government in the election, so this is, in essence, payback by the Liberal government to those big union leaders.

Let us be clear on that. The Liberal government is denying workers the right to a secret ballot, knowing full well what that really means. It is 2016, and the right to a private ballot is being denied by our new Liberal government. Let us think about that.

Now, of course, Bill C-4 does more than deprive workers of a democratic right to a private ballot on the subject of unionization. It

also seeks to eliminate the transparency of requiring unions to publicly disclose how tax-deductible union dues are spent by big union bosses. Big wages, big expense accounts, and who knows what else?

I find it incredibly ironic that on the very day our Liberal government announces Bill C-4, Elections Canada reveals that the Liberal Party of Canada is caught illegally taking union donations, union donations that come from mandatory union dues. Of course, the Liberal Party and the union say it was all just a mistake. Somehow the union knew where the leader of the Liberal Party would be in advance and was provided access so that paid individuals would attend a Liberal election event. Were there any other mistakes of this nature? With the repealing of union financial disclosure, we will never know.

On that same theme, we also know that once upon a time the Liberal leader took payments from unions to give speeches. Thousands of dollars of union dues were paid to the member who is now the leader of the Liberal Party. We know this because, to give credit to the Liberal leader, it was disclosed. Interestingly enough, had these thousands of dollars been provided in terms of gifts there would be a clear conflict.

However, paying an elected MP for speeches is in effect a loophole in the conflict act. Surprise, surprise: the unions pay the member thousands of dollars for speeches and the member of Parliament in question turns around and opposes bills that unions do not like.

● (1805)

I just want to point out that this is not the 1970s in a banana republic.

[*English*]

This is happening in Canada today, because it is 2016.

I am deeply troubled that a member of Parliament can be paid thousands of dollars by unions for speeches and then turn around and oppose changing bills that unions do not like. What bills do unions oppose? They are bills that provide workers with the democratic right of a private ballot and bills that create fiscal transparency and accountability of those same big union bosses.

We are facing challenging economic times. Tens of thousands of Albertans have lost their jobs and one of the first bills from the new Liberal government is a union payback bill. It would do nothing to help our economy. It would do nothing to create jobs. It would do nothing for workers' democratic rights. It would do nothing for public accountability and transparency.

Government Orders

Has there been wide consultation with the Liberal government and stakeholders on the bill? We know there has not been wide consultation. I find that interesting. When it comes to projects that create jobs that Liberals do not support, they delay, citing a need for more consultation. Yet when it comes to payback for Liberal friends, the need for consultation is suddenly a muted concern. That suggests to me that this legislation is seriously flawed. I submit the Liberals are not widely consulting on the bill, because removing a worker's right to a private ballot raises the question as to why they want to limit democratic rights.

However, I do understand why the Liberals want to act quickly on this. I suspect if unions were ever forced to publicly disclose where all of those mandatory tax-deductible union dues flow, it might further raise uncomfortable questions. Are there other elected officials being paid by unions for speeches and then carrying out union legislative wish lists? We will never know. I guess it is better just to sweep it under the rug.

I admit I have not enjoyed giving this speech. I would rather us focus on ways that we can strengthen our economy and create more jobs for our citizens. I would rather find ways that we can make our communities safer and create more transparency and accountability within our democratic institutions. I would rather focus on finding ways to help those who are less fortunate and supporting seniors in our communities. Yet here we are, protecting the interests of big union bosses. This is a thank you from the Liberal government. This is not sunny ways and in my view it is not how we build a better Canada.

Let us also recognize that in today's global economic climate businesses often relocate to jurisdictions that have preferable regulatory or cost advantages. This also applies to labour laws. It is critically important that Canada have a competitive regulatory regime that does not place workers at an economic disadvantage. Labour laws absolutely need to be fair. They need to be balanced and ultimately provide workers with democratic rights that include the right to a private ballot.

Before I close, I just would like to say I am very proud to come from British Columbia. British Columbia was the first province in Canada to introduce secret ballot legislation in 1873, and here we are today in Ottawa saying private ballots for workers is somehow a bad idea. I guess it is because it is 2016.

I submit this legislation is misguided and flawed. It is disappointing to me that the Liberal government is using one of its very first bills to reward big union bosses instead of helping out middle-class Canadians that the Liberal government purports to support.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think anyone would accuse former Conservative Senator Hugh Segal of being a big union boss or supporting big union bosses. He identified a number of problems with Bill C-377, including the unconstitutionality of the bill, the constitutionality question by the Canadian Bar Association, the invasion of privacy blatant in the bill, and the creation of inconsistent disclosure obligations between trade unions and government employers and corporations, both private and public.

I do not ask my friend to address all of these flaws, but could he at least address one of them?

• (1810)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member's intervention. I have a tremendous amount of respect for former Senator Segal. He was in my caucus, and he is a very intelligent person. However, to be frank, democracy means having a variety of voices. He raised concerns about the bill, no different than many members of the NDP.

At the end of the day, we all stand behind something. However, I do not see the Liberal government standing behind it. It just says that it is flawed, or it is too much this or too much that. What the Liberals are doing is taking it all away and not bringing back anything that would be a substantive improvement, such as allowing those mandatory union dues to be online for members to see. It would be just like people donating to a charity or church where they would be able to find out where those dues went. To me that is the premise.

If the member opposite has better suggestions, get a hold of the minister, put some legislation together, and get it in here. I will support legislation that supports better transparency for union workers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am outraged by my colleague's remarks. As the former president of a local union, I had to manage my members' money for eight years, eight wonderful years during which I was accountable to them. We had to present financial statements at every meeting.

What my colleague is saying is wrong because unions have to provide financial reports. Every union has its own members and its own clearly defined rules.

I am pleased that we are moving forward with the bill introduced by our government colleagues. It is a step in the right direction.

Union leaders are being talked about as though they are fat cats, but I do not see myself that way.

I would invite my colleague to side with workers. We can follow the example of unions in order to improve health and safety, increase salaries and enhance workers' right to a better life.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, certainly I will support things that help Canadian workers, and part of that is allowing them to know how their union dues are being used. It is the same as when people donate their hard-earned money to a charity. These funds are exempt from the Income Tax Act, and because of that, there are some responsibilities that go with it.

I recognize we live in a great country with a great democracy. All of us here were elected by secret ballot. Even our Speaker was elected by a secret ballot. We know, at the end of the day, that when people have their choice without intimidation, we are all better off as Canadians.

Government Orders

Those are the reasons why I stand in this chamber and speak. I respect that the member has her own reasons, and that is what makes our country great.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the discussions the member had with his colleagues when they passed Bill C-377, was he aware that seven provinces voiced opposition to this bill. They had concerns with encroachment on their jurisdiction as it related to labour issues?

Why did the previous federal government see fit to interfere in provincial jurisdictions as it related to labour relations, and put labour relations and the whole balance of labour relations in jeopardy in the provinces of the country when it was not a federation jurisdiction at all?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, in today's complex environment, we will touch points at provincial, federal, and local levels. However, when these things are raised, we should not just say we oppose something out of a parochial sense of jurisdiction. We should say what the things are that we would like fixed. Unfortunately, the Liberal government has just said that it is all flawed and it will take everything away without giving workers the transparency they need.

In regard to Bill C-25, all of that is related to the federal sphere and has nothing to do provincially.

This is about supporting Canadian workers, and I would hope the member would consider that viewpoint.

• (1815)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the great member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

I am very pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-4, the proposed repeal of two labour bills passed by the previous government. This is an important piece of legislation, and I encourage my fellow members to support its passage in the House.

Some do not agree with our moving to repeal these bills, which is fair enough. However, suggesting the government has a hidden agenda goes too far. During the election campaign, the Prime Minister publicly made a commitment to repeal both these pieces of legislation. Canadians went to the polls and they expect us to keep our commitments. It was also clearly spelled out and made public in her mandate after the minister was sworn in as Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour. This commitment was restated by the Prime Minister when he spoke to the Canadian Labour Congress in November. Far from being part of some hidden agenda, the government's intention to repeal these bills was made very clear, stated often, and its reasons for doing so were repeated frequently.

Let us start with the most important reason. Repealing these bills would help restore a fair and balanced approach to labour relations in Canada. While both of these bills pose a number of problems, today I am going to focus on the legislative amendments made by Bill C-525. Bill C-525 changed the union certification and decertification processes under three federal labour relations statutes: the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, and the Public Service Labour Relations Act.

Prior to these amendments enacted through Bill C-525, federally regulated unions could use what was called a “card check system” for certification. If a union demonstrated that a majority of workers had signed union cards, the union could be certified as the bargaining agent for these workers, although it was only required if less than a majority signed but enough to indicate a strong interest, 35% under the Canada Labour Code, for example.

Bill C-525 changed that to require that unions show at least 40% membership support before holding a secret ballot, and to require a vote even where more than 50% of voters had signed union member cards. It also made it easier for unions to be decertified by lowering the threshold to trigger a decertification vote to 40%, compared to majority support, which was previously required. Essentially, Bill C-525 made it more difficult for Canadian workers to unionize. This is not good for our economy and it is not good for Canadians. Unions help to address inequality by helping to ensure fair wages. They help protect worker safety and prevent discrimination in the workplace. They also help employers because a fair workplace is a more productive workplace, and more productive workplaces help to grow our economy and help strengthen our middle class.

What was presented in Bill C-525 was essentially a solution in search of a problem. There were no great rallies on Parliament Hill or even in the boardrooms demanding that we change a union certification system that had worked successfully for many years. The card check system, whereby a union is certified by demonstrating majority support through signed union cards, has been used successfully for many years in the federal jurisdiction and in several provinces. A number of unions, like Unifor and the Airline Pilots Association, argued that it is fast and efficient and much more likely to be free of employer interference than the mandatory secret ballot system brought in under Bill C-525. The card check system is not undemocratic. It required a majority support through signed cards. The Canada Industrial Relations Board has strong measures in place to ensure the process of signed cards is fair.

It should also be noted that representatives from both sides of the bargaining table were highly critical of how the previous government brought in these changes. Both bills were brought in as private members' bills, and without consultation with employers, unions, or other levels of government.

• (1820)

Many argue that it set a very dangerous precedent for future labour reform. They are right. We believe that fair and balanced labour policies developed through real and meaningful consultation with unions, employers, stakeholders, the provinces and territories, and the Canadian public are essential for harmonious labour relations.

Government Orders

Bill C-377 also presents problems that could have been averted with proper consultation. We have heard my colleagues talk about that in great detail. Among other things, it has the potential to seriously disrupt collective bargaining processes. For example, detailed information about unions, including information on union strike funds, would be available to employers. It seems like a blatant attempt to make things harder for unions. We recognize the essential role that unions play in protecting the rights of workers and helping the middle class to grow and prosper.

It is clear that the legislative amendments enacted through these bills must be repealed in order to restore fairness and balance in our approach to labour relations in Canada. To do less would be a disservice to workers, employers, and the economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech given by the member for Yukon.

[*English*]

His speech was clear and very interesting, even if I disagree with it close to 100%. However, I respect the hon. member.

How can a gentleman like him, a very strong and good parliamentarian, oppose secret ballot votes?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, there are secret ballot votes already under certain circumstances in the legislation, but it has been proven for years and years that the card-signing system is efficient and people have not complained about it. In fact, as I mentioned in my speech, Unifor and the Air Line Pilots Association said that this was more democratic and less likely to cause people to lobby and force votes.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has been in the House for many years and understands the process of legislation and the structure of how we make improvements to the Canada Labour Code. One of the things that shocks me the most about the previous government bringing these two private members' bills forward is that anyone who is in government would know that the Department of Justice would have given the minister of labour and the member, in the private member's bill process, an explanation as to whether it was provincial or federal jurisdiction.

Why would the previous government bring in legislation that was in the provincial jurisdiction, related to provincial labour agreements, and did not have anything to do with the federal government per se?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, the member brought up one of the major points about this bill, which is the case with some other bills too that I would love to talk about, and that is the process as opposed to just the content. I have certain personal qualms sometimes with how private members' bills do not get the same rigorous analysis by departments, the same type of consultation, and the same type of constitutional review as other bills. A private member's bill results in a law, the same as any other bill, so why would it not get the same type of thorough treatment?

Personally, I would like to reform the system to ensure that all bills are looked at with the same wisdom by the technocrats, the people who have spent their lives working on the technical details, so they can provide technical information, some of which the

member mentioned, to parliamentarians. Of course, the bottom line is that parliamentarians ultimately have to and should make the final decision based on a comprehensive technical review to ensure the bill is under the right jurisdiction, makes technical sense and does not offend the Constitution. As we know, Bill C-377 is under a constitutional challenge.

• (1825)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I sit here listening to members from the Conservative Party who, in some cases, literally thump on their desks for the cause of democracy, I would be remiss if I did not take note of the fact that when Bill C-525 was first presented in the House, it said that if people did not attend a meeting on certification, the government would, in effect, vote for them and say how they would be voting. In the case of certification, members not present would, effectively, be deemed to have voted against certification. In cases of votes for decertification, union members not present would be deemed to have voted for decertification.

Surely, if the government were to present legislation in the House that were to dictate the votes of members not present for votes, all of us, including members in the Conservative caucus, I think, would say that this was an affront to democracy.

In light of that conception in the original bill, does the member find it as rich as I do to be accepting lectures today from the Conservative caucus on the nature of democracy?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, as part of sunny ways, I will not criticize anyone. However, I did want to compliment the member's father. I served with him in the House. He was a wonderful legislator. I know that the member will follow his process.

The point the member is making is that we need to have fairness and comparability in all the processes. We do not just assign votes to people who do not show up.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to stand today in support of Bill C-4. Bill C-4 removes many of the barriers and administrative burdens on labour groups that the Conservative government put in place.

I would like to begin by saying that unions have played an important role in Canada for a very long time. It is that partnership that has contributed to the success of this country and our economy. It is important to mention that it has also improved the fundamental rights of individuals in the workplace. That is essential and should be noted.

The contributions of unions have been very large, but I would like to share a few points with the House tonight.

Unions have played a major role in establishing an eight-hour workday, a five-day work week, parental benefits, which are essential as well, and health and safety standards. There are many areas where the unions have contributed to the success of those changes.

Government Orders

Labour unions have greatly contributed to the balance between the rights of workers and the ability of employers to run efficient operations and businesses.

In my past life, I spent 11 years as the superintendent of the French school board. During that time, I had many opportunities to work closely with unions, unions that were our partners and our workers. I can assure members that it was a successful experience with successful negotiations. The employees were able to benefit from many of the things we negotiated, but the school board was also able to gain from the negotiations. It was a partnership that was extremely important.

Unfortunately, Bill C-377 has tipped the scales in favour of management by forcing the public disclosure of information, which in most cases, is not required for private corporations.

It is important to mention that Bill C-4 is in no way intended to cut transparency.

Bill C-377 is redundant legislation.

If we look at the province of Nova Scotia, the Trade Union Act has provisions that allow all union members to access copies of any financial statement free of charge. The result of this transparency measure is that no complaints have been filed in Nova Scotia over the last five years on this type of issue.

I must also mention that the province of Nova Scotia has noticed the federal government's interference in this area, which is traditionally a provincial jurisdiction. At the May 7, 2015 meeting of the Senate committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, the Nova Scotia Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, Hon. Kelly Regan, stated:

governments all across Canada are doing what they can to eliminate regulatory duplication and red tape...It's hard to understand why the federal government would enter into this area of provincial jurisdiction.

I agree fully with the minister.

It is even more surprising to hear the opposition say that most people were in favour. B.C., Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, P.E.I., and of course, Nova Scotia all opposed Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

I would now like to talk a little bit about Bill C-525. This Liberal government is proud to be able to undo the damage done by the Conservative government's Bill C-525. That bill is forcing workers who want to create a new union to obtain the signatures of 40% of its members and have a secret ballot on the issue. Obviously, the Conservative government's strategy was to add layers to the process for creating a new union.

Our government firmly believes that we should not discourage people from participating in a union. That is why we want to restore the former system under which workers only needed the signatures of 50% plus one.

[*English*]

As with so many of its initiatives, our government is working hard to collaborate with all regions of the country, with all sectors of the economy, to bring real change for all Canadians.

Our government has chosen to put its trust in this country's labour organizations and the workers they represent. We must ensure that they are not treated unfairly at the negotiating table. This represents a change of tone and attitude compared to that of the previous government. It is a tone where we treat not only unions and their workers with respect but also our indigenous communities, veterans, families, and democratic institutions.

I am proud to provide my full support to this bill and I congratulate the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour for her leadership in bringing this legislation to the House.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was great to hear the member from Sackville speak about the collective bargaining process.

A very important part of collective bargaining is the ability for employees to withdraw their labour. That right really only has effect if the employer cannot just bring in replacement workers.

Several times in previous Parliaments, anti-scab legislation has come forward. Often the Liberals have spoken very positively about it, but when it came down to actually voting for it on final reading, they would sort of fall away, would not show up, or vote against it, that sort of thing.

Now that the Liberals have the majority and could pass anti-scab legislation, I am wondering if the member from Sackville could commit to do so.

● (1835)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, we are focused on making the necessary changes that will allow for a strong relationship between unions and industry, the economy, so that we can ensure improvement and continued growth in this country.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague a question regarding consultation on Bill C-4.

The member talked about how none of the consultation happened before with Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. However, we did extensive consultation. We had many union members and union leaders come in at committee and Senate stage to talk about this.

Does the member not understand that some of the polling we did with Leger and Nanos showed that more than 84% of union members were in support of the legislation we put forward.

Did the Liberals do any consultation with actual union members, or was it just with union leadership?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised to hear the member across talk about consultation.

We all know there was very little, if any, consultation. The Conservatives tried to put the legislation through in a private member's bill.

Adjournment Proceedings

We consulted with all Canadians from one part of the country to the other throughout the campaign. It was very clear. That is why we are the government today. We are the government today and we will bring change for Canadians, positive change that will allow unions, the Canadian government, and companies to work closely together to improve the economy of this country.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his very good speech. During his speech he spoke about red tape duplication. What we mean by that is, the provinces already have legislation dealing with these matters in their jurisdiction. In fact, this legislation that was put in tries to duplicate things that are already under provincial jurisdiction.

Why would any government, including our own, want to proceed in this fashion when it is not constitutionally our jurisdiction and just adds another layer on something that does not need to be done as it is?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, it has been quite obvious that for the past government, working with the provinces was a no-no. There was no discussion. Whenever the prime minister or any ministers arrived in any one of the provinces or regions, they did not even let the provincial government know they were in town. They had no consultation whatsoever and never allowed them to expose information of that nature.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Because of the vote, we have extended the sitting by 10 minutes.

The hon. member for Simcoe—Grey will resume when the motion comes back for debate.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last December, I asked the government to withdraw from the court challenge aimed at striking down the provisions of Bill 99, legislation passed by the Quebec National Assembly. The response was a resounding “no”. Are we disappointed? Of course we are. Are we surprised? Not really.

Quebec's prerogatives are very rarely respected by this House, so we were not surprised to hear the government feed us the same old lines and say that being part of Canada is non-negotiable. However, I recall a speech given in the National Assembly by Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa sometime in 1990, in which he said, “What does Quebec want?”

This is not the first time Quebec has said what it wants. Quebec has also been very clear about what it does not want on many occasions. We clearly expressed what we wanted through Premier Bourassa. In response, Canada sent back a very clear message at the time, and that message remains the same today: “Canada does not care about what Quebec wants.”

Mr. Bourassa was no fool. He retorted, “What does Canada want?”

Several weeks have passed, and over the past few weeks, we have heard the invective and the disparaging, dishonourable remarks sometimes tinged with a thinly veiled neo-colonial attitude from across Canada.

However, now that Quebec has once again clearly expressed what it wants and what it does not want, Canada's response has been this: “Drink our oil and shut up.”

What can we expect from this federation and its government when we ask that Quebec's democratic laws be respected? This federation cannot stand it when we want to protect our environment, our land, our air, and our water. Is it surprising that the federal government intends to circumvent Quebec's rules of democracy? No.

It is surprising, however, to see so many of the 78 elected members from Quebec remain silent on this. It is disappointing to see some members from Quebec trumpeting western Canada's oil industry instead of standing up for their constituents, their towns, their communities, and especially their own nation.

Essentially, I am calling on the government to do the right thing. That is why I am again asking that it withdraw from the court challenge orchestrated by the henchmen of the partitionist movement. I am no fool. I do not expect much. That is why I am a separatist and why millions of Quebecers are separatists who want their own country. I assure you it will happen.

As time goes on, we see more and more that Canada is not the country of Quebecers. More than ever, French North America as a whole is faced with the prospect of being wiped out because Quebec is not respected by this House, because the only francophone state in North America is systematically belittled by the Canadian majority, and sometimes by its Supreme Court, which often leans the same way.

“What does Quebec want?” The question is futile because, in any event, practically no one listens to Quebec anymore. As time goes on, it becomes more and more obvious that Canada is holding back Quebec. As time goes on, it becomes more and more obvious that Quebec's place is among other countries. We are not a province, we are a nation.

Our place is not among Canada's closed files. We are the Quebec nation, and believe me, our strong and democratic voice will be heard for a very long time.

● (1840)

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to participate in this debate on the Government of Canada's position on the Henderson case.

It is important to understand that Canada did not initiate this dispute. The Government of Canada has been brought into this case, and all we can do is confirm our long-standing position, which is in line with the well-known 1998 Supreme Court ruling.

Adjournment Proceedings

In Reference re Secession of Quebec, the Supreme Court identified four principles of the Constitution as well as the applicable Canadian constitutional framework.

Canada's position is simple: all legislative measures affecting the rules for the secession of a province must comply with the law, as established by the Constitution and the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Government of Canada has stated that the courts must read Quebec's Bill 99 in accordance with the Constitution and in accordance with the Supreme Court's definitive interpretation.

The Government of Canada maintains that the Superior Court should strike down the disputed provisions of Bill 99 only if it deems that they are unconstitutional and that they lie outside the jurisdiction of the Quebec legislature.

The Supreme Court of Canada unequivocally stated in 1998, in Reference re Secession of Quebec, that no province can unilaterally secede from Canada under domestic or international law.

The court concluded that, in order to be legal, the secession of a Canadian province would require a constitutional amendment. Furthermore, the court found that a referendum has no legal effect on its own, although it may carry political weight.

The Supreme Court found that Canada and the provinces would be required to negotiate only if a province had a clear majority vote on secession based on a clear question.

In any case, what has been clear for many years is that Quebecers do not want a referendum. The government does not intend to reopen the constitutional talks of 30 years ago. Those talks belong in the past and we do not intend to become involved in a political discussion that belongs to the ancient past.

Canadians have had enough of this debate. Priority should instead be given to the current and future needs of Quebecers and all Canadians.

In closing, no one wants another referendum. The Government of Canada continues to focus on Quebecers' priorities and to work with the provinces in order to create jobs and grow the economy.

• (1845)

Mr. Michel Boudrias: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by my colleague across the way about the jurisprudence.

We all know that precedents are legally binding in a free and democratic society, especially under the rule of law.

Even the House recognized that Quebec is a nation, and although I do not personally find the terms of that recognition satisfactory, it will do for a start. Quebec is a nation.

Two important precedents exist with respect to Quebec democracy. In 1980, we got 40%. In 1995, we got 50%. Both times, the "no" camp came up with some legal stumbling blocks, and we still have no clarity about exactly what transpired.

When it comes to democracy, Quebec does not need any lessons from any institution or state because it is a pioneer of democratic law, particularly with respect to political party fundraising. We have a wealth of historic precedent.

[English]

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, our position in this case is the position the Government of Canada has always held. Quebec's Bill 99 should be read by the court in a manner that is consistent with the Constitution as determined definitively by the Supreme Court.

What the Bloc Québécois is trying to do is re-open old, constitutional debates.

[Translation]

Contrary to what the sovereignists would have us believe about this case, which started at least 15 years ago, the government's position simply reflects the rule of law in Canada as established by the Supreme Court of Canada. We will focus on what matters most to Quebecers and all Canadians: co-operation, jobs and the economy.

[English]

CANADA POST

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to follow up on a question that I asked in December. It was prompted by some shock at an article that appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* where some of my fellow MPs from Winnipeg, who belong to the Liberal Party, were saying that post-election, having gone to their constituents, a lot of them were now expressing that they were just fine with having lost their home mail service and that they were not looking to have it restored.

It goes against my experience. In Elmwood—Transcona, throughout the campaign and indeed after, I hear from many people who are concerned about losing their home mail delivery and are disappointed in the government failure so far to restore what has already been cut.

Home mail delivery service is important. It is important to many different people. It is important to seniors who are struggling to stay in their homes. That struggle often is what we might call a battle of straws, many things that add up that finally force people out of their homes. Having to walk a block or two to a community mailbox, especially in winter in Winnipeg, is no small straw on the back of seniors trying to stay in their family home and not have to move into an apartment or other facility. These are the people who are very concerned.

There are people living with disabilities for whom having to travel to a community mailbox is no small issue. There are people who may have simply decided that home mail delivery service is an amenity just like any other that we consider when purchasing a home who are now losing it. In that sense it is not unlike the library moving to a different end of town or a community pool closing down.

We know, however, that home mail delivery, even though it is an important service to people, is not where Canada Post is making its most money. We know that parcel delivery brings in more revenue than home mail service, but part of our point is that a public corporation has a mandate to also provide public services.

We believe that is a service worth paying for, particularly in light of the fact that Canada Post has not been losing money. The only time in recent memory that it lost a lot of money was when the employees were locked out by the Conservative government.

We maintain that this is a service worth keeping. We are anxious that the review that the Liberals have undertaken will come to that conclusion for all the people who want to keep that service.

An area of concern, however, is around the TPP that was being signed today. We know that there are provisions for crown corporations. We know what those provisions say, at least in general terms, that public corporations have to behave as if they were a commercial enterprise.

There is a lot still to be studied with respect to the TPP, but surely the Liberal government, in its desire for good governance and understanding the policy implications of major decisions, has done an analysis, surely, of the effect that signing the TPP may have on a review of Canada Post services, and the effect of a requirement that public corporations act as commercial entities may have on the outcome of that review.

I am hoping that the parliamentary secretary can shed some light on the government's understanding of what those provisions in the TPP may mean for home mail delivery in Canada.

• (1850)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate this evening on the future of Canada Post.

Since pre-Confederation days, the postal service has linked Canadians together from coast to coast to coast. All Canadians continue to rely on Canada Post today. However, as well as being integral to our lives, Canada Post also has a commercial mandate and a legislated requirement to be self-sufficient.

In 2013, Canada Post, directed by the previous government, put in place a five-point plan and began to phase out door-to-door delivery in favour of community mailboxes. On October 26, one week after the election, Canada Post suspended the conversion from home delivery to community mailboxes.

On October 26, in his mandate letter to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, the Prime Minister directed that she undertake a review of Canada Post to ensure that it provides the high-quality service that Canadians expect at a reasonable price. Indeed, that aligns with what we said during the election.

This government has also made a commitment to evidence-based decision-making. We need to have the facts and evidence. Canadians expect transparency and they deserve to see this information.

[*Translation*]

Canadians can take part in the discussion on the future of Canada Post. That is why the government promised to conduct an evidence-based, inclusive review process that welcomes the opinions of many stakeholders, including those of all Canadians.

Adjournment Proceedings

As part of this review, we will consult with Canadians of all ages and from all walks of life to get their point of view. We want to know what people want and expect from their postal service.

I encourage all hon. members to do their part to promote a respectful exchange with and between Canadians across the country.

In short, we are doing what we promised we would. We promised to suspend the installation of community mailboxes and that is what happened.

We also promised to conduct a comprehensive, independent review that would allow all Canadians to have a say on the future of Canada Post. Canadians can expect to have more information on this review shortly.

The independent review will consist in a comprehensive consultation process in which Canadians will be able to share their concerns.

• (1855)

[*English*]

This review will be a prudent step. It will put the facts and evidence on the table; it will allow for an open, inclusive, and full public conversation about Canada Post; and it will allow Canadians and the government to make educated and informed choices together.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, of course, the debate always works best when two ships do not pass in the night.

I just want to be clear about what my question was. I understand that the government will be conducting a review. We heard from the hon. member that Canada Post does indeed have a commercial mandate. Our concern is that that commercial mandate not overshadow its public mandate. I am concerned that with the signing of the TPP and certain provisions in that agreement, the results of the review and the question of its commercial mandate versus public mandate may be prejudiced by these.

I am just looking for some assurances from the parliamentary secretary tonight that they have looked at that and understand the potential implications of the TPP for Canada Post and the further review they have undertaken. That is what I am really hoping she can speak to right now.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Speaker, Canada Post's plan to convert door-to-door delivery has been suspended.

This government is committed to a comprehensive and independent review, an open and transparent review that will inform and consult Canadians and give them a role in the choices that are made around their postal service.

[*Translation*]

This review seeks to ensure that Canada Post provides the high-quality services that Canadians expect, at a reasonable price.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

Adjournment Proceedings

(The House adjourned at 6:58 p.m.)

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