



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 030 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, March 10, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 10, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1000)

[*English*]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the 2015 annual report of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(e), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFICE OF THE CORRECTIONAL INVESTIGATOR

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the annual report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator for 2014-15 as required under section 192 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, as well as Correctional Service Canada's response.

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in relation to the main estimates 2016-17.

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food concerning its study of the supplementary estimates for fiscal year 2015-16.

•(1005)

[*English*]

BAN ON SHARK FIN IMPORTATION ACT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-251, An act to amend the Fisheries Act and the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act (importation of shark fins).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce Bill C-251, An act to amend the Fisheries Act and the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act (importation of shark fins). I would like to thank the member for Drummond for seconding my bill.

This bill would prohibit the importation of shark fins into Canada and legally ban shark finning in Canadian waters. For those who are unaware, shark finning is the horrific practice of cutting the fins from living sharks and discarding the remaining shark at sea. The sharks then drown, starve to death, or are eaten alive by other fish. It is a brutal practice.

As top predators, sharks play a key role in maintaining ocean health. Unfortunately, their populations are plummeting around the world. Scientists report that over 100 million sharks a year are being killed, primarily for their fins, shrinking the international shark population and driving dozens of shark species near extinction.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature reports that a quarter of all shark species are threatened with extinction as a result of shark finning. Some populations have dropped by a stunning 99% over the past 50 years. The best way to curb illegal finning is to stop the international trade in shark fins.

Canada can become a world leader in shark conservation and ocean stewardship by adopting this legislation that will protect sharks. I hope that all members of this House will support the bill.

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

* * *

NAVIGATION PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-252, An Act to amend the Navigation Protection Act (Shawnigan Lake).

Government Orders

He said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to introduce this bill today. This bill adds Shawnigan Lake to the scheduled list of waters protected under the Navigation Protection Act.

It is but a first small step in the much larger battle against contamination of our water resources. It is outrageous that we are not effectively protecting marine wildlife, drinking water, and our watersheds from environmental degradation.

I want to let the community of Shawnigan know that I will continue to be an ally in the fight to protect water resources and preserve them for generations to come.

If I may, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Shawnigan community's courageous fight against the contaminated soil dump in their watershed. I intend to be there with them for the long term.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last several months, I have had a chance to travel across the country and speak to many people about the importance of the Office of Religious Freedom. I have a petition signed by literally hundreds of Canadians, predominantly from the greater Toronto area, calling on the government to renew the office to continue to do its good work.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from some of my constituents regarding their concerns about the present electoral system in Canada and the fact that it does not result in a Parliament that reflects the number of voters who cast ballots for each party. They ask that the House undertake consultations across the country, and that after those consultations some form of proportional representation be introduced in our electoral system.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Families for Justice is a group of Canadians who have had a loved one killed by an impaired driver. They believe that Canada's impaired driving laws are much too lenient. They want the crime to be called what it is, vehicular homicide. It is the number one cause of criminal death in Canada. Over 1,200 Canadians are killed every year by a drunk driver. Canadians are calling for tougher laws such as Bill C-652, Cassandra's law.

* * *

•(1010)

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

[English]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed from March 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure to rise this morning to speak to an issue of great importance for the riding of Fredericton, for New Brunswick, and certainly for all of Canada.

Canada is both diverse and inclusive. These characteristics are wound into our identity. In fact, Canadians' respect for diversity of neighbours in our communities, and our tendency to include others who may not resemble us in appearance or in mind, is a hallmark of the very best of Canada.

The government has and continues to demonstrate through its actions that it will ensure that what it does reflects this type of country, the very best of what we have to offer and the very best of what we can be.

Legislation to amend the Citizenship Act, which was introduced in the House last month, lays out changes that will provide greater respect for diversity and inclusion, as well as flexibility for those who seek to contribute to our country and are trying to meet the requirements of citizenship.

It will help immigrants obtain citizenship faster, help them contribute more fruitfully to our communities, and help us build a stronger socio-economic fabric in Canada.

Proposed changes in Bill C-6 would also repeal provisions of the Citizen Act that allow citizenship, the prime tenet and characteristic of what it means to be Canadian, to be revoked from dual citizens who engage in certain acts against the national interests. These provisions will ensure that there is only one class of Canadian.

Additional changes that are proposed will further enhance program integrity and ensure that our immigration system reflects the fact that we are an accepting, welcoming, and caring nation.

Fredericton is home to over 6,300 immigrants, who have arrived from over 60 countries. Of the over 600 permanent residents in Fredericton in 2012 alone, over 40% were opening new businesses and contributing to the local and regional economy.

Immigrants invest their own money to be successful. They buy existing businesses. They start new businesses. They hire professionals and employees. Other immigrants in the Fredericton region are specialized professionals who are needed in specific industries, and international students who have come to our community and decided to make New Brunswick their home.

Newcomers contribute so much to our communities.

[*Translation*]

That is why the government encourages all immigrants to begin the process for full and permanent membership in Canadian society. We know that one of the best foundations for successful integration into life in Canada is Canadian citizenship.

With Bill C-6, the government will help immigrants become citizens more quickly by reducing the period for which permanent residents must be physically present in Canada before being eligible for citizenship by one year. The proposed change would reduce the requirement for physical presence in Canada from the current four years out of six to three years out of five.

The government would also remove the requirement for applicants to be physically present in Canada for 183 days per year during each of four years within the six years prior to applying for citizenship. Keeping this requirement would not allow applicants to benefit from the shorter physical presence requirement or the new non-permanent resident time credit.

[*English*]

Because of changes made by the previous government, since last June adult applicants must declare on their citizenship applications that they intend to continue to reside in Canada if granted citizenship. This provision has created great concern among some new Canadians, including those in the riding of Fredericton, who fear that their citizenship could be revoked in the future if they move outside of Canada, even for a short period of time. This is just one example of the mean-spirited approach towards newcomers that people in Fredericton and across this country gleaned through the previous government's imposition of changes to the Citizenship Act.

The current government is proposing to repeal this provision, as well as other provisions. All Canadians are free to move throughout and outside of Canada. This is a right that is guaranteed through our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Recognizing that immigrants often begin building an attachment to Canada before becoming permanent residents, Bill C-6 proposes to provide applicants with credit for the time they are legally in Canada before becoming permanent residents. This change would help to attract international students and experienced workers to Canada.

Currently, due to changes made by the previous government, changes that for the life of me I simply cannot understand, people cannot count time that they spent in Canada before becoming a permanent resident towards meeting the physical presence requirement for citizenship.

Again, the changes in this new bill would let non-permanent resident time count toward the new three-year physical presence requirement for citizenship, for up to one year. Under this change,

Government Orders

each day that a person is authorized to be in Canada as a temporary resident, or as a protected person before they become a permanent resident, it could be counted as a half day toward meeting the requirement for citizenship.

In the riding I have the honour to represent, the riding of Fredericton, we boast of two world-class universities, which have a stellar history and reputation of recruiting high-calibre students to our community. The University of New Brunswick, Canada's most entrepreneurial university, and St. Thomas University, a leader in liberal arts, recruit prodigious persons from around the world each year. These students come to Fredericton, to New Brunswick, and they study hard, get active on campus, and quite frankly they engage with the broader community.

With so much to offer, and in a province with an age demographic that demands we do everything possible so these students can continue to contribute to our socio-economic wealth, why would we not do everything we can to keep these members in our community, ease their pathway to citizenship, and build a stronger Fredericton, a brighter New Brunswick, and a better Canada?

The changes introduced in Bill C-6 that I have just spoken about support the government's goal of making it easier for immigrants to build successful lives in Canada, something that is good for all Canadians.

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

The amendments proposed in Bill C-6 would fully repeal all the provisions of the Citizenship Act that make it possible to strip Canadian citizenship from dual nationals who are involved in activities against the national interest.

These grounds for revocation apply only to people with dual or multiple citizenship. The legislative changes implemented by the previous government in May 2015 created new grounds for the revocation of citizenship that make it possible to revoke the citizenship of dual nationals if they have engaged in activities against Canada's national interest. Bill C-6 repeals those new grounds.

Clearly, all Canadians who commit criminal offences must face the consequences of their acts through the Canadian justice system.

*Government Orders**[English]*

I began by talking about the diverse and inclusive nature of Canada. This characteristic and defining feature of our country has been on full display over the past several months as tens of thousands of Syrian refugees have been welcomed into our communities right across the country. Please let me acknowledge once again the tremendous effort of people in Fredericton and right across New Brunswick who have punched well above their weight in accepting more refugees per capita than any other region of this country.

We know that accepting and providing opportunity for newcomers has always been in our best interests as a country. It is in this spirit, through the intentions of this bill, that we would build that stronger Fredericton, that brighter New Brunswick, and quite frankly that better Canada.

• (1020)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for participating in this debate, but it is unfortunate to see what has been the strategy of the Liberal Party when it comes to the original Bill C-24 and then continuing on. That strategy was to spread misinformation about the bill and the effects of those provisions, and then to warn us that the bill was creating fear when in fact it was the misinformation about the bill, not the bill itself, that was creating fear.

It was clear again in this member's speech. He talked about the expectation of residency. Let us be clear. There is absolutely no requirement that Canadian citizens reside in Canada, whenever they acquired their citizenship. That was the case before Bill C-6 and that was the case under Bill C-24, as well as before that. To suggest that this is not true or that there is a fear means that if there is a fear out there we all need to step up and clarify that it was not in any way part of Bill C-24. There was an expectation that people reside in the country, but there was absolutely no such requirement. I wonder if the member is willing to acknowledge that fact and correct the record in terms of his speech.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, what I will acknowledge is how unfortunate the last 10 years were to all kinds of Canadians who were divided against one another, from different regions of the country and from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. We have decided to put an end to that, starting with measures contained in our Speech from the Throne, measures that will be in the budget two weeks from now, and measures contained in these changes to the Citizenship Act. Those are about uniting Canadians and about building a stronger society, a better economy, and environmental safeguards, which can allow future generations of Canadians to live together. This is about what is in the very best interests of Canada now and what we can become for years into the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech. Obviously, we New Democrats think that this government bill is a step in the right direction. We were extremely critical of the Conservatives' Bill C-24, which was divisive and created two classes of citizens. We are pleased to be fixing that mistake now, with the bill currently before us. I do have a question, however. In February 2014, the

Conservatives raised the processing fees for citizenship applications from \$100 to \$530 per person, which means that the costs could well go over \$2,000 for one family. We in the NDP believe that those fees are too high. Will the Liberal government commit to bringing down the cost to a reasonable price, which used to be \$100?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

As the minister said yesterday, we are open to making constructive changes to the bill, just as we are open during the discussions that are held in Parliament, in the House, or in committees. That is how we want to work with the other parties in the House. If a good suggestion is made during committee meetings or in the House, the parliamentary secretary to the minister and all parliamentarians on this side of the House will be open to discussion.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech and thank him for his comments.

[English]

I want to ask the member about, in part, the comments that were raised opposite, which I find quite incredible. Even after legislation was enacted by the previous government, which explicitly put in an intent-to-reside provision in the legislation and which we are removing, somehow the effects of that impact are being denied by the members opposite.

I was quite taken by the comments of the member for Fredericton in respect to the fact that there are two terrific universities in New Brunswick, St. Thomas and UNB. I wonder if the member for Fredericton could comment on how this kind of legislation, which would create pathways to citizenship and formal and full integration into New Brunswick and Canadian society, assists great universities such as UNB and St. Thomas in recruiting people and retaining them in our Canadian communities.

• (1025)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, New Brunswick is a place with an aging demographic that needs bright, young people with a wealth of skills and potential. I am so fortunate to know that these universities, which serve as welcoming points for newcomers to the community, can help foster that type of education and potential for the province.

At St. Thomas alone, a tiny liberal arts school, which I had the honour of graduating from and being an alumnus, upwards of 10% of the student population are international students. These people go on to become teachers, social workers, human rights leaders, and lawyers, to do the type of work needed to ensure there is a diverse community, not just in Fredericton, not just in New Brunswick, but right across the country.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to rise in debate today on Bill C-6. As this is Canada's House of Commons, I will do something very special to start off my remarks today, which I have not done before in this place. I am going to take the oath of citizenship:

Government Orders

I swear
 That I will be faithful
 And bear allegiance
 To Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second
 Queen of Canada
 Her Heirs and Successors
 And that I will faithfully observe
 The laws of Canada
 And fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

Most MPs in this House, and I am sure many of our new members on all sides, have taken part in citizenship ceremonies. I think my colleagues would agree that it is a most special occasion, because we see people who come to this country for remarkable opportunities, we see them with family and friends, and they swear or affirm that oath and become an official part of the family. By that point they have already become a vibrant part of their community.

I attend ceremonies, both outdoors and indoors, and on Canada Day. I write to all new citizens in my riding to congratulate them, welcome them, thank them, and urge them to become active members of the community and to really engage in what that citizenship provides, if they have not done so already. We have to keep that in mind. I have been to homes where that letter that I have written them as new citizens is displayed on the wall because they value that citizenship and hold it very close to their hearts.

This is an important debate that has been manipulated at times. It certainly creates passion. I will provide a precise discussion of the subjects in Bill C-6 and hope we can move some of the government members off their stand, which is actually not a principled stand on Bill C-6. I will explore why it is not principled with respect to revocation.

Bill C-6 does not just deal with the elimination of the narrow grounds of revocation that were extended to crimes against the state by the previous government; it also intends to repeal the intent-to-reside provisions. Some members have suggested that this would impact mobility rights under the charter. As a lawyer, I do not think that is the case at all.

The very basic expectation that all members of this House would have when they see people take that special oath that I did at the beginning of my remarks is that they are joining the family with the intent to be part of it. Why would we remove that provision? It makes no sense. We expect people to maintain their ties with whatever country they came from and use the tremendous wealth and opportunity we have as Canadians to go around the world exploring. Intent to reside has no conflict with any of that. In fact, we love the fact—and I have this in my own riding and the wider GTA—that people will then become ambassadors, advocates, or fundraisers for the countries they came from when they joined the Canadian family.

That in no way is hindered by suggesting that new citizens should intend to live in the country they are joining as a full citizen. Therefore, that one clearly makes no sense and has not been well articulated by the government either in its election or in the debate so far.

It would also reduce the number of days that someone would be physically present. This could be debated but is not as controversial.

Certainly, the 183-day commitment is a tax-driven number, but it is changing from the old standard of 183 days per year and four out of six years to three out of five. There is less consternation associated with that principle, but it is in Bill C-6 as well. I have not heard a clear reason for a change to be made there; however, it is minor and so it will not be the subject of most of my remarks.

My final point is with respect to the change to language requirements, with the expectation of some competency in English and French for new citizens. The bill changes the target groups from 14 to 64 to 18 to 54. I have some concerns with that as well, particularly in an environment where we see people working longer in the workplace and with respect to the important role that immigration and our new citizens play in our economy by filling gaps, building businesses, and becoming job creators.

● (1030)

A few years ago, I nominated a friend of mine to be top Canadian immigrant of the year, and I think there might be a couple of members of this House who belong in that special awards ceremony given each year. My friend, Ihor Kozak, was serving in the Canadian Armed Forces within a decade of immigrating from Ukraine. I was amazed that he not only embraced the citizenship and opportunity that Canada represented, but coming from an area of the world that was still having problems with Russia, he wanted not just to be part of Canada but also to serve Canada.

I am amazed by immigrants in my riding, new citizens who have built businesses and are employing people, adding to the economy and taking leadership roles in service clubs and their church communities. I am constantly amazed by that. We should target that and make no bones about wanting people to come. We want them to participate fully in our economy, in our communities, in faith groups, in civic organizations, and run for Parliament, and many have. We should encourage that and should not shift it with the expectation that we are changing it.

However, most of my remarks will be preserved for that first element I talked about in my concern with Bill C-6. The Liberal government has suggested that Bill C-6 is a principled stand when it comes to revocation, that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. Unity of citizenship, I heard the member for Fredericton say. That is not true.

If the government and the minister who introduced Bill C-6 want to be principled, they would end revocation. Revocation is not ended in Bill C-6. Some of the grounds for revocation are removed, but revocation of citizenship for a naturalized Canadian remains.

Government Orders

I will show how the narrow crimes-against-the-state provision that we added in the previous government perhaps should attract revocation more than fraud or misrepresentation, or at least equally so, in terms of the morally blameworthy standard, which is the underpinning of criminal law.

I am very proud of the last Conservative government's record when it comes to immigration and new Canadians. We had 1.6 million new citizens over the course of that government. The year 2014 was a record year, with 263,000-plus new citizens joining the family, reciting that oath with which I started my remarks, which is very important. As well, we did not reduce immigration, despite a global recession, because we know how critical our new citizens are to our economy and to building opportunity for others. The Conservative government's average of about 180,000 or so new citizens per year is much higher than the 164,000 or so under the previous Liberal government.

There is a lot of rhetoric with respect to Bill C-6, but I have not heard much statistical support or even moral clarity for the direction the government is taking.

One thing all members of this House should recognize is that equality is not sameness. Not everyone is the same. In fact, we embrace diversity, and diversity is part of the equality all Canadians enjoy, but it is important to let the government know that there are citizens who have rights and responsibilities as Canadians and that there are citizens who have rights and responsibilities and obligations as other citizens as well. In fact, Canada has almost one million dual citizens. About 200,000 people who were born here have acquired citizenship in another country through a family member, and there are about 750,000 dual citizens who are naturalized Canadians and who retain their citizenship from their mother country or the country from which they came to Canada.

I have heard the Prime Minister say a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. If he wanted to do so, he could eliminate dual citizenship, because dual citizens in some cases have military service obligations, as is the case with Greece, and they may have tax obligations.

Therefore, there are rights and responsibilities as Canadians, but some Canadians have additional rights and responsibilities, and that has to be debated.

• (1035)

I embrace dual citizenship, but I dive into the issues. I do not just use it as a slogan. Let us recognize that for what it is. A lot of Canadians cherish the ability to have that dual structure, but let us not suggest that is the norm.

Fifty-two countries do not allow dual citizenship. If we are going to have an informed debate in the House of Commons on the issue of citizenship, this should be part of the debate. Many of those countries are Liberal democracies and allies and friends. Germany, Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands do not permit dual citizenship, and India, Japan, South Korea, and China do not permit dual citizenship, so when new members of our family from any of those 52 countries become citizens in Canada, they lose their citizenship automatically.

I am not suggesting we go there, but let us have a debate. If we recognize that some Canadians have additional rights and respon-

sibilities attached to their citizenship, then let us have that debate. Let us not suggest that what was done by the previous government somehow diminished Canadian citizenship. The previous government recognized the importance of Canadian citizenship and the duty of fidelity and loyalty and a shared commitment of country and state and the new member.

Revocation would still be permitted by the present Liberal government for fraud or misrepresentation, but not for the narrow grounds of crimes against the state. Since 1977 there have been 56 revocations. It is likely higher than that, because recent numbers have been hard to nail down. One of those was Mr. Amara, one of the Toronto 18 terrorists, who was convicted for plotting a terror attack. The others are primarily Nazi war criminals. In 2011, Branko Rogan's citizenship was revoked, and that was supported by the Federal Court. Justice Mactavish recognized the inhumane acts he committed in the Bosnia conflict and his fraud when he came to Canada, and that led to revocation. What was the abusive act? Evidence was provided that he abused Muslim prisoners in Bileca, Bosnia. His citizenship was revoked. Why was his citizenship revoked? It was revoked for his fraud or misrepresentation in coming here and the court's recognition of inhumane acts, which was why he committed fraud. The court made a moral determination based on his previous behaviour.

However, if somebody committed those same reprehensible, inhumane acts in this country, it would not be determined morally blameworthy enough under Bill C-6. That is, if someone commits fraud after being part of a genocide elsewhere, that individual would have his or her citizenship revoked, but if the individual promotes or creates that here through an act of terror or treason, that would not be considered morally blameworthy enough. That is an absurd position in law.

I have not heard my colleagues in the government articulate a rationale as to why inhumane acts abroad could lead to revocation but such terrible acts in Canada would not. We are talking about three narrow grounds. We are talking about charges under the Criminal Code, the National Defence Act, and our Official Secrets Act, or Security of Information Act as it is called now.

A lot of new members of our family take the oath, which I remind people says:

...I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

Many of the people who take that oath would suggest that to commit crimes against the state they are now joining would be morally blameworthy enough to show that they have not lived up to their obligation. This is not window dressing. This is an oath administered in front of a judge, and it is to be a true oath. If there is malice or fraud in someone's heart while that oath is being taken, then that oath should be nullified, in my view.

The last government extended revocation on the very narrow grounds of treason, espionage, and terrorism. Those are crimes against the state. We have heard about the slippery slope. People were misleading Canadians during the election by suggesting that if they committed some criminal act, it might be applicable, but these are narrow provisions, and I will tell the House how rare they are. Since Confederation, there have been eight cases of treason, six of them in World War I. Louis Riel was a tragedy in the early years of our country. That is how narrow the ground is that we are talking about.

● (1040)

Espionage is equally small, and it is hard to get numbers, but it is literally in the single digits. As for terrorism, there have been 22 convictions since the last Liberal government introduced the act following 9/11. Of those, with the amendments made by the Conservative government, there has been one revocation.

The ridiculousness of the slippery slope and the fear created by the government over this issue have been shameful. We are talking about narrow ground. More people have committed fraud over heinous acts abroad than have committed acts of terror or treason here. That has to be part of this debate.

I want to start hearing the same sort of rationale and approach, because this actually is not new to Canada. In fact, between 1947 and 1977, revocation under our Citizenship Act in its various forms has come and gone. Engaging with the enemy or serving in an enemy army was grounds for revocation in the past. Treason was grounds for many years and then was eliminated in 1967, in a time when treason and World War I and World War II seemed far-off notions. This was pre-terrorism and the global rise of terrorism.

Liberal governments of the past have revoked citizenship for fraud and for a variety of potential grounds. That is the right of the state because, as some scholars have described, citizenship is a right to have rights. We extend a whole range of rights before citizenship, which is great. It is part of our country and our charter. However, we have to recognize that with citizenship come rights and responsibilities.

Revocation is not a criminal sanction. It has been described by scholars as preservation of the conditions of membership. When we use that description, it sounds a lot like fraud or misrepresentation. If someone lies about their name and what their past might entail, that is equally as bad as lying about their intention to faithfully observe the laws of Canada, is it not?

I have not heard an argument here from the government. We are talking about a handful of cases since Confederation that might be extended by these narrow grounds. I am expecting more from the government, and I think our new citizens are expecting more.

If we think about the case of Mr. Rogan, the modern war criminal who created atrocious crimes against the Muslim population in Bosnia, it was right that we did not allow him to use fraud to gain citizenship by concealing his inhumane acts. At the same time, Canadians would expect that if someone came here with malice in their heart, made that oath, and at the same time or shortly thereafter was plotting crimes against their new state, that person was not being faithful to that oath and to our high standards of citizenship.

Government Orders

In the past we have also had constructive repudiation of citizenship. That is something the Liberal government has used in the past as well, whereby a known terror suspect abroad who is a dual citizen is just not brought home and will languish in a foreign jail in the country where he was caught. There has been a handful of these constructive repudiation cases, which I think amounts to the same thing.

What I would like to hear from the government is more than just electioneering. This is the citizenship of our country. A crime against the state and the narrow grounds that we extended revocation to is a crime against what we all pledge and what we all embody as Canadians with the freedom and remarkable opportunities we have.

If the government wanted to be principled, it would have eliminated revocation, but if revocation of citizenship is still there for fraud, for terrible acts conducted elsewhere, why would terrible acts conducted here, in violation of that citizenship oath, not be equally as morally blameworthy and subject to revocation?

I am hoping that in the rest of debate we will hear this, so that we can preserve how important and special Canadian citizenship truly is.

● (1045)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Durham invited a lot of responses and questions.

First of all, he started his commentary with respect to the intent-to-reside provision actually posing no conflict or confusion in the minds of newcomers. Simply put, currently, if one does not indicate an intention to reside, citizenship is not granted. If that does not sow confusion, I am not sure what does. It readily displays how out of touch my friend opposite is with the concerns of immigrants and newcomers to this country.

Second, he stated that revocation has not ended altogether and that we are therefore not principled as a government in what we are proposing in Bill C-6. However, revocation on the basis of fraud has existed in legislation in this country since 1947. We are returning to the status quo ante. The reason revocation for the purposes of fraud is the only provision that has existed, until the previous government decided to up the ante, is that we treat fraud in the context of citizenship with a citizenship sanction. We treat other acts, such as criminal acts and the litany of items raised by the member for Durham, with a criminal sanction. In fact, he said so himself that revocation is not a criminal sanction. That is right, and that is the point. It is why revocation on the basis of criminality has no place in this legislation.

Government Orders

On the last point, the member indicated at length that the record of the previous government on diversity was quite good. However, I find it incredible that one would start with an oath of citizenship reference and recite the oath of citizenship, when the previous government in fact limited the taking of that oath of citizenship for certain women from certain religious communities based on what they wore.

Why does the member continue to defend a diversity record that is in fact lamentable and not recognize that Bill C-24 was a barrier to integration of newcomers, as opposed to some sort of lever to promote it?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the parliamentary secretary to the House. I have read his personal story, and it is an inspiring one.

My best friend is Malian Canadian, and he joined me in the House of Commons when the Aga Khan spoke about how important the cosmopolitan society of Canada is.

In his remarks the member posed a variety of questions. I will not address all of the issues raised, because my speech was mainly about revocation. He did not address the remarks I made about moral blameworthiness. He has conflated that with a number of other things, and we could have a debate on those, but most of my speech was on revocation and equating fraud and the moral blameworthiness of that to crimes against the state.

I used the example of someone who committed heinous crimes against humanity under Idi Amin's regime, who then came here and lied about it in Canada. They could have their citizenship revoked. However, someone who came to Canada as part of a sleeper cell and committed an attack would not have their citizenship revoked, even though the act would almost be equally morally blameworthy.

I told the member that we are talking literally about a handful of crimes and crimes against the state. A principled stand would have been to eliminate revocation, if one were truly being principled. The Liberals are making choices, and I have said they have not defended that choice of why the commission of crimes against Canada as a state is less blameworthy done here than crimes committed elsewhere.

●(1050)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it bothers me to hear the Conservative Party members keep defending former Bill C-24, which created two classes of citizens. People who had dual citizenship could lose their Canadian citizenship, while people who had Canadian citizenship only could not lose it. The former immigration minister was even dismayed that Canada had signed international agreements preventing it from creating stateless people. We see how far the previous government was willing to go.

Why is the Conservative Party still not defending the principle of equality before the law? Why is it going against the advice of the Canadian Bar Association, the Barreau du Québec, Amnesty International, and the Canadian Council for Refugees, which felt that Bill C-24 was inconsistent with our own Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and international law?

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, the member is confusing my comments here today and why I feel that the narrow addition of revocation measures for crimes against the state, and my defence of that on a principled basis, is different from recognizing our parliamentary democracy.

The government has a right to bring Bill C-6 forward, but it is my role as a parliamentarian in the opposition to ask it for more of an explanation than a hashtag or some sort of an electioneering slogan. The Liberals have not explained that difference, and I will not reiterate it.

We should recognize that almost all European countries have revocation of citizenship for a variety of reasons, including treason and on public safety grounds. This is not abnormal. In fact, France is basically going the same way, recognizing this new phenomenon that needs to be addressed, where someone could arrive with malice in their heart to conduct an act against the French state. On the narrow grounds we are talking about, it is something that should be examined, as many European countries have done.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member pointed out that under Bill C-6, inhumane acts committed abroad can result in the revocation of citizenship. However, those same acts committed right here on Canadian territory could not result in someone's citizenship being revoked under Bill C-6.

I had the opportunity to sit down with a number of new citizens in my riding, who shared some of their concerns with regard to the legislation that is coming forward. Some of them commented that the reason they came to Canada to become members of the Canadian family was the heinous crimes committed in the countries they came from, huge atrocities committed against them and their families and also against governments.

All of that is to say they came here for the purposes of hope. With this change to Bill C-6, they are seeing very little of that. Could the member comment on that?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend's narrowing in on the critical part of my argument here in the House, about the moral blameworthiness of conduct that would lead to a response from the state. That is essentially what criminal law is, whether one is incarcerated, fined, or whatever. That is the state pronouncing on the moral blameworthiness of conduct.

What I find striking, and the member raised it, is that a lot of people are fleeing countries where inhumane acts might occur, and we want to make sure that the perpetrators of those acts cannot come here fraudulently.

I am suggesting to the House that it is a perverse position to say that someone who comes here to do the same thing is not equally as blameworthy. I have to reiterate that since 1867, we are only talking about 30 or so cases this may apply to. The slippery slope and some of hyperbole we have heard from the government on this is simply not supported by the facts.

I am hoping that in our debate here, we start to hear some of those facts and some of that moral reasoning.

Government Orders

•(1055)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the hon. member talks about the need to not electioneer, but in fact this issue arose in what seemed to be an endless pre-election period last year.

It was an electioneering issue. Certainly people saw through it. A particularly interesting moment occurred just at the beginning of the campaign. I was in a studio of a South Asian station in Surrey. I was due to go on the air and talk about a variety of things, including Bill C-24.

Just prior to my segment, the member for Calgary Midnapore was interviewed over the phone. He made a point about Bill C-24 to the host and the audience listening to that South Asian station that the listeners did not have to worry because they could not have their citizenship stripped, because India did not permit dual citizenship.

That really twiggled it for me. Okay, now all of a sudden, we have one group that can suffer a particular sanction, whereas another group, basically due to a technicality, cannot. Everyone saw through that.

How could the hon. member and his party support that kind of approach?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for that question because it does address some of my remarks. I have said that if we are talking citizenship they have not wanted to talk the moral rationale or the statistics leading to Bill C-6. However, in my remarks I did discuss that there are 52 countries, including India, that do not permit dual citizenship, and there cannot be a stateless person at law.

Citizenship has with it a number of rights and responsibilities that flow both ways. As I said, some scholars describe citizenship as a right to have rights or, in our case, additional rights like the right to vote to elect that member.

What we need to have when we talk about these things is a rational discussion about why the former Conservative government really just returned to the 1966 position of having treason as a ground for revocation. Mackenzie King probably brought it in; I should have done that research. This is a rational discussion we have to have, and I think most new citizens, when we talk about these narrow grounds, agree with it to preserve the sanctity of that citizenship.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to speak to Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act.

Before going any further, Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver Centre.

I am proud to speak in support of the bill. I am proud to do so as the son and grandson of first generation Canadians, as a former public servant who fought against organized crime and terrorism, and now as a member of Parliament in the House, at the very heart of our democracy.

Make no mistake, Bill C-6 is very much about protecting our democracy. It is about showing respect for the generations of immigrants who helped build our country up from its very

foundations. It is about protecting the pathways to citizenship for future new Canadians. It is very much about ensuring that equality of citizenship remains a right enshrined by the charter.

On this side of the House, we believe, as the Prime Minister has said, that Canada is strong not in spite of its diversity but because of it. The new policy measures introduced by our proposed legislation will safeguard this value through and through. This was a key promise during the election, and Canadians are right to expect that we would deliver on it.

Nevertheless, there are some on the side of the official opposition who object to the bill. In brief, they say that our proposed legislation will make Canadians less safe and it diminishes the value of Canadian citizenship. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the law passed by the party opposite drastically overreaches, introduces hierarchical classes of citizenship, does nothing to keep us safe, and does nothing to enhance the value of citizenship.

Let me highlight the flaws under the old Bill C-24.

Under the law as it stands, Canadians who are convicted of certain serious crimes, and yes, including terrorism, may be stripped of their citizenship, but only if they hold citizenship in another country or could hold citizenship in another country. Therefore, it is not just Canadians who are dual citizens, but also Canadians who could be dual citizens, whom the opposition considers less equal than others.

It is not just terrorism, either. In the latter stages of the last election, a number of leading voices from the opposition were calling to expand the list of offences which could trigger revocation. Therefore, when the member opposite asks for evidence and facts about the slippery slope, there it is. It is part of the public record. It is not hard to see why some on the other side of the aisle say these things. Who does not want to punish a murderer, let alone a terrorist, and who does not want to denounce those who denounce Canada by their violent actions, motivated by a twisted ideological purpose?

As we reflect on these questions, I think of my own experience in prosecuting terrorists. I worked on the Toronto 18, along with some of the finest public servants I have ever known. This case involved a plot to detonate bombs in Toronto and to wage an attack on Parliament Hill. It was a serious and complex case and alarming to the public.

One of the ringleaders of this conspiracy was Zakaria Amara. He was convicted. Some of my hon. colleagues across the way have referred to Mr. Amara frequently of late. This is because Mr. Amara was born in Jordan and was, thus, caught under the dual citizenship provisions of Bill C-24. Just weeks before election day, he received a letter from the then government by the then minister of citizenship and immigration that he would be moving to revoke his citizenship.

Government Orders

The opposition says that Mr. Amara is the only one who stands to win when we pass Bill C-6, as it will have the effect of reversing the revocation process and allow him to maintain his Canadian citizenship. Mr. Amara is no winner. Mr. Amara is a convicted terrorist and he is serving a life sentence. I helped put him and his co-conspirators behind bars, which is where he remains to this day. The only winner is the Canadian public that saw an individual convicted following a fair trial and due process.

Let us put aside the winners and losers rhetoric. The opposition goes on to argue that revoking Mr. Amara's citizenship and deporting him to Jordan or some other place will make Canada safer. They are wrong. Where is the logic in deporting a convicted terrorist from our soil to some other place, where Canada has a diminished capacity to prevent future terrorist activity and where the deportee would only have an increased capacity to continue to recruit, to radicalize, and potentially to return to do more harm to us should he choose to resume his agenda?

● (1100)

I challenge my friends across the way to come up with a credible answer to that question. I think they will find it difficult to do so.

Even looking at their own policies, one finds inconsistencies. For example, the Conservatives also sought to make it a crime for Canadians to travel to some of the very same regions to which they would banish domestic terrorists. How can they reconcile that for the average Canadian? They cannot. Indeed, not only would deporting convicted terrorists not keep Canadians safer, I fail to see how it would keep any of our friends or allies safer.

I want to spend my remaining time talking about one of the central focuses of Bill C-6, which is to uphold the equitable principle of Canadian citizenship.

Taken at its highest, the opposition argues that if we do not strip away citizenship from convicted dual citizens and those eligible to be dual citizens, we are somehow tainting citizenship for those citizens of the "old stock", to quote one expression coined by the opposition party. The thrust of its position is that it undermines citizenship to allow a convicted terrorist to remain in our midst.

Let me be clear. We in the House are united in our resolve against terrorism. The Prime Minister has repeatedly said that terrorists belong behind bars. No one should ever doubt his resolve, nor that of the government, to confront any individual or any organization that would bring harm to our country and to see them brought to justice.

The previous government may not have liked to admit it, but all members, on all sides, take seriously our responsibility to keep our country safe. Bill C-6 would do just that. It would subject all criminals to the full force of Canadian law and the Canadian justice system. It would eliminate the former government's exception for those who hold, or could hold, citizenship in another country. It would mean that every Canadian, whether born here or naturalized, must obey the same laws or face the same consequences. It says that if people are convicted of terrorism in our country, they will go to prison in this country and they will stay there.

The opposition says that we should compromise the equality of our citizenship, but all it offers in return is a false promise of security.

Canadians have rejected the politics of division and fear. They have said, clearly, that there is no place in our laws for discrimination between those of us who were born here and those of us who were not. It now falls to us in the House, with this bill, to say the same.

My support of the bill is based upon the rule of law. My support of the bill is a vote of confidence for all the professionals who work in the law enforcement, intelligence, and corrections communities. My support of the bill is based upon the fundamental principle that it is the bedrock of who we are and the basic measure of what we share. A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.

To be clear, I do not begrudge the members opposite for being angry, or even afraid in the face of terrorism. Those are the basic human responses to seeing our laws broken and our freedoms abused. However, we must not allow our fears to erode the principles and values on which our country was founded: equality, fairness, and compassion.

We are better than the law that is now on our books. It does not make us safer, but it does make us less equal. That is why Bill C-6 must pass.

● (1105)

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member pretty much stuck to one point of the bill, but what are his thoughts on the value of citizenship, the value of permanent residence, and the way to becoming a full-fledged citizen?

In a previous bill, one of the criteria we brought as government was the requirement of four years to six years, being here 183 days, and filing tax returns in our country for those four years to six years. Most of the people I talk to in my riding of Huron—Bruce feel this is a reasonable threshold.

What are the member's thoughts in reducing that threshold in the bill?

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, we have always been a pro-immigration country. What we have seen in the last 10 years are the pathways to citizenship becoming more impeded and more difficult to achieve for those new Canadians and those aspiring to become new Canadians. One of the ways in which we are removing those barriers is to reduce the residency requirements.

This is one of the ways in which we will remain a leading nation for people who want to come to our country in pursuit of a better life. That is what brought my family here. That is what brought many of my colleagues here. I dare to say that is what brought many of the families of those on the other side here. That is why we are standing up for this policy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and commend him on it.

Government Orders

Obviously, the NDP believes that repealing the unfair and discriminatory provisions that the Conservatives imposed on Canadians with dual citizenship is a step in the right direction. It was a useless lingering threat.

I have a question regarding the processing times for citizenship, which must be improved. We were told that applications would now be processed within 12 months, when we know that it can take up to three, four or even five years. This creates major problems for people, particularly with regard to family reunification.

In the past, the government informed us of the wait times for every international office in the world. For example, we knew how long it took in Nairobi or in Buffalo when there was an office there. Now the wait times are all combined into one international average.

Will the government commit to reducing wait times and give us the information for every international office so that people who are applying for citizenship have all the information they need?

[English]

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite and his party for their support of Bill C-6. It is always nice to have support on both sides of the House for the common principle of protecting the equity of citizenship and having just one class.

With respect to his question regarding wait times, as the member well knows, the last 10 years have done no service whatsoever to seeing any of those backlogs reduced. In large part that is because we have seen resources cut to those departments.

I know the Minister of Immigration is working very hard. In fact, no one is working harder than he is to ensure that we have those resources allocated to the departments to get at those applications so we can reduce backlogs and improve pathways to citizenship. I can assure the member that where we are able to be transparent with regard to where those backlogs occur, we will do so.

• (1110)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague explain why driving a terrorist who has been convicted of crimes in our country to the airport makes this world safer under the Conservative legislation than our proposal, which is keeping them in jail? Why would we support legislation that effectively exports terrorism around the world when we have a duty to protect our allies? Why would we not keep a convicted terrorist in jail rather than driving them to the airport?

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague knows the answer to his question. He would have heard it in the course of my speech.

In my mind, and in the minds of those who have put serious thought into this question, it makes no sense whatsoever to take convicted terrorists to an airport and to deport them to some other place where we will not have the same Canadian capacity to have eyes on them and to ensure they will not continue to radicalize or recruit or to try to find ways to bring harm to our country.

It makes sense that we bring criminal penal sanctions to those who deserve those sentences to ensure they are here and kept under lock, safe and key for as long as necessary.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to stand up and support Bill C-6 in the House.

I know that during the last 11 weeks of our election campaign, I must have heard from hundreds of my constituents about this bill. Many of them were dual citizens. Some of them were new citizens. Some of them were not new citizens but had been here for quite a while. They were concerned that citizenship was meaningless, that no matter how much they were Canadian citizens, no matter how long they had lived in Canada, and no matter what they had done, they could easily be deported for crimes against the interests of this country.

No one is suggesting that by repealing the Conservative decision to deport people with dual citizenships because of crimes that they should not be held responsible for, tried, and brought to justice under those crimes. What we are saying is that they are now citizens. A citizen is a citizen is a citizen. If people who are Canadian citizens have committed a crime against Canada and against Canadian security, then they should be tried in this country. They should be kept under guard here to ensure they are not a continued threat and that they face justice in this country, because they are Canadian citizens.

This is a promise we made in the last election, that we would repeal this bill, and we are now keeping this promise. This is going to be very important, not only for my constituents, but for many Canadians across this country who were concerned about this issue.

The second thing has to do with the ability to become a citizen and how fast we can do this. Right now, applicants have to have four years of permanent residency out of six years in this country before they can become citizens.

This is so illogical. It is not common sense. We have people who come and are not yet permanent residents. They are waiting to become permanent residents. They have businesses. We are living in this global economy where people have one foot in businesses all over the place. They are carrying on their businesses. They are travelling for all kinds of reasons for business purposes. These people come bringing a business agenda to Canada, bringing their skills, knowledge, and investments into Canada. Sometimes they should be able to move back and forth as they are awaiting citizenship.

I know there are many young people who have come to this country with their parents, who have finished university, and who are doing internships in other countries. They are doing all kinds of work in other countries in various areas. They not only have to spend periods of time out of the country, but have to spend a lot of time outside the country to study and do business there. This opportunity for Canada to have global citizens is extremely important. This assists international students who come here and who want to become citizens.

Government Orders

The path to citizenship is an important path. I just came from Europe where the OSCE, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, was talking about the whole concept of refugees and immigrants coming into the country. What we have in Canada, and possibly the United States to some extent, that they do not have, is that we try to make citizenship a pillar of what it is to be Canadian. The moment we are citizens, we suddenly belong. We are equal to everyone else in this country, whether we have only become citizens a day ago, or whether we have been citizens for 20 years or were born here. We all belong, and that sense of belonging gives people a stake in Canada. Suddenly what is good for Canada is good for them, and what is good for them is what is good for Canada. They want to bring their children up with the opportunities they can get in this country.

Most immigrants and citizens are pulling for nation building. Citizenship, for us, is a path to nation building.

When I was a minister, one of the things we heard, when we had good information from the long-form census, was that by 2011 we were going to be dependent for our net labour force on foreign-trained workers, whether temporary or permanent ones, who wanted to come here and become citizens. Canada's labour force is dependent on this. We do not have enough people being born here to continue to fulfill our requirements, especially for very skilled workers. This is a good step in the right direction, not only to encourage people to come here, but to become part of the society, to make Canada economically, socially, and culturally strong.

I feel very strongly about that. This whole requirement that they be here to live is important. It helps to be flexible. It gives people the opportunity to be able to do those things.

● (1115)

The other issue, again, is let us have common sense. We are now saying that the language requirement, as it used to be, will be between the ages of 18 and 54. Most young people under the age of 18 are learning English or French in schools. Most seniors over 54 who come as family class, family reunification, are too old to get a job here, so their ability to speak either language is not as important. They can learn that from the community integration service agencies.

In British Columbia, we have many service agencies that are doing an excellent job of helping people to be functional in the language. People between 18 and 54 need to be functional in their professional capacity and in other areas, in language, to become good citizens, to get into the workforce and do that work well. I think that is important.

One of the things I also like about the bill is that we are telling Canadians that we take very seriously what citizenship is all about. We will authorize the minister and/or his or her officials to seize any document that he or she has reasonable grounds to believe is fraudulently or improperly obtained, or could be fraudulently and improperly used. This is important. It is keeping an eye on people who are trying to become citizens with false documentation, pretending to be something they are not.

That is another way of tracking people who are coming to this country for reasons other than wanting to become full participating

citizens, wanting to contribute to Canada. I think this is part of a concept of good security. This piece is important, as well of looking at the number of days in which a person would have reasonable grounds to suspect that they are a criminal. We are adding one more component to this. It will continue to say that if an individual is serving time in prison or on conditional sentencing in the community, then those days cannot be counted toward citizenship.

This bill is a common sense bill. It recognizes that citizenship is very important for this country, that the ability to nation build is what we have done from day one in this country, when we all first came to the shores. Some of us have been here a longer time than others, like me. The point is that we all came and built a nation. It is today seen as an important nation because it is a global nation. We think of the ability of people to come to Canada, to maintain their language, their culture, and their sense of attachment to where they came from. It allows us, as a trading nation, to globally assist Canada in understanding the needs of countries we want to trade with, and how to do that in a culturally sensitive manner.

This is part of a bigger picture. This is part of building a nation. This is part of building a labour force. This is part of allowing people to bring their families together.

I think we learned a lesson a long time ago, when we brought in the Chinese and for 25 years we did not allow them to bring their families. How awful and cruel that was. None of us want people to be away from their families. Families are a solid unit. An individual who brings their family here is able to develop roots, to dig those roots, so that everyone can pull in the direction that Canada wants to go, that children can grow up feeling safe and secure and have the opportunity to become fully functioning Canadians.

This is all part of who we are. We have much to teach the world. When I was in Europe, again recently at the OSCEPA, there are so many people in Europe who see immigrants and refugees as "other". They feel that these people will change the face of Europe. I am here to say that our face in Canada is changing daily and yearly because of all the people who come to our shores as immigrants and refugees. They have contributed, and they have built a fantastically important global nation, which has brought to the world an ability to have peaceful resolution to conflicts, an ability to see the world in a true light, and to contribute fully.

I want to say how much I support the bill and what a good piece of common sense legislation it is.

● (1120)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are not doing here is debating the issue of immigration and the value it has on Canadian society. We are all clear on the fact that immigration has contributed to the success of our country.

Government Orders

Although I was not here then, if we look at the numbers under the Conservative government, they speak for themselves. It is true that 1.6 million new Canadians were brought into this country, with an average of almost 12,000 more a year. From my understanding, there would have been more had there not been the backlog that stemmed from the previous government to when the Conservatives took over.

With respect to Bill C-6, we are talking about a very narrow band and the revocation of citizenship as it relates to terrorist acts. I know that the member opposite spoke a lot about immigration and immigration policy in her speech. However, I am curious to find out why she thinks those citizens in our society who commit acts of treason and acts against the state should maintain their citizenship.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, what I stressed was not that immigration is good for Canada; every party agrees that immigration is an important part of building an economically strong, diverse, and global Canada.

What we are talking about here is very specific. We believe that because citizenship is at the heart of our immigration policy, citizens have the right to belong and be treated equally. If Canadians were naturalized because they were born here, they are treated accordingly for whatever they do in this country. When people become citizens of this country, their rights are equivalent to those of naturalized Canadians. They should be dealt with in this country if they commit a criminal act or an act against the state.

We are not saying that people should not be punished. We are saying that they have to be dealt with as citizens. We cannot say a citizen is a citizen today, and tomorrow they are no longer citizens for other purposes. We are saying that a citizen is a citizen and that he or she is to be treated under the full process of our law, as we would treat someone who was born in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

The NDP is proud to support Bill C-6 because it is a step in the right direction. The bill corrects the mistakes made by the previous government, which created two classes of citizens. That is a major concern for us as progressive social democrats.

I would like to ask a fairly specific question. As I mentioned, Bill C-6 is a step in the right direction. However, it does not fix all of the mistakes. The minister has the discretionary power to grant citizenship in exceptional circumstances. Unfortunately, the nature of those circumstances remains secret.

Given that the minister has this exceptional discretionary power, if the Liberal government really wants to be transparent, it could at least inform us of how many cases are processed, the number of people who are granted citizenship under these rules, and why. We would like this information to be made public, not kept secret.

• (1125)

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, the question from the member is a good one. I want to thank the New Democratic Party for supporting this. We all see it as moving forward in an appropriate manner.

The question of doing things in secret is something that this government has had enough of for 10 years. We want to be transparent and open. However, as a case is being processed through the minister's office, there is a certain amount of confidentiality that is required until it is finalized. The minister is then responsible to Parliament for reporting on the number of applications that the government received that year and what happened in those cases. That will all be part of that transparency process.

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague if she thinks that one of the greatest concerns with respect to Bill C-24 is that bureaucrats could revoke the citizenship of ordinary Canadians and not the courts, as it should be.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree. We are again back to the idea that citizens are citizens of this country. They should have equal access to justice, health care, and all of those things, but also equal responsibilities to the state. In Canada, we know the rule of law is such that if people are accused of something, they have access to the courts. They are able to have a lawyer to defend them. They also have the right to appeal in certain instances. The way we see this is that the rule of law is clear and simple, whether people are dual citizens, new citizens, or have been here for eight generations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that I will share my time with the member for Peace River—Westlock. I look forward to hearing him speak to this bill.

Not a single day goes by that I do not think about what a huge privilege I have to sit in the House and represent the people of my riding, Mégantic—L'Érable.

As a new member of Parliament from a small region of Quebec, I must say that this place is rather impressive. This is where elected officials contemplated the laws that have defined the Canada we know today. This is where they discussed and debated. Each government, each Parliament, and each parliamentarian had the opportunity to contribute to making our country, which is still a young one, one of the most admired democracies in the world. We are admired for our values of equality, compassion, justice, hospitality, and openness.

I am also impressed by the quality of the parliamentarians in this 42nd Parliament of Canada and by the diversity of its members. Just take a look around during question period and listen to those talking, and it becomes clear that Canada is a unique place in which everyone, regardless of where they come from, can help contribute to our country's future.

I would like to quote the Minister of Democratic Institutions, who spoke to the House yesterday about Bill C-6:

Whether an international student, or someone who works at GE, or a new Syrian to our community, we should acknowledge, encourage, and reward the choice that individuals make to come to Canada and to call this place home. They are experiencing Canada, especially before citizenship matters. Their choice to be here matters.

Government Orders

This will not always be the case, but the minister is absolutely right. I agree with her thoughts on this. Many people from around the world have chosen to live in Canada. Out of all the countries in the world, they chose Canada. This is the first country they chose to come to, as a new host country. I completely agree with the minister that we must acknowledge, encourage, and reward the choice that individuals make to come live in Canada.

What we must ask ourselves is why did these people choose Canada as their country? Why did they make that choice? The answer is obvious. They did so because Canada has always been a welcoming country, not just for the past 10 years or 100 years, but from the beginning.

It may not seem like it, but I am a very distant descendant of a German immigrant, a mercenary who came here to fight in a war and who chose to stay.

That is the nature of our Canadian citizenship. It is recognized around the world. When we travel, being Canadian is a little bonus wherever we go. Therefore, in my humble opinion, we must do everything we can to protect our values and this identity.

As I said earlier, as parliamentarians it is our role to make good decisions for future generations, just as parliamentarians in the previous 41 parliaments did before us. We have a responsibility towards Canadians. I would like to quote the member for Calgary Midnapore, the former minister of citizenship, immigration and multiculturalism, who said in his speech yesterday:

Canadian citizenship should be the gold standard; it should not be the bargain basement of citizenship in the world.

That brings me to Bill C-6. I am sure that the government's intentions are very honourable. Every single one of us is here to try to make things better, but we have to admit that sometimes we make mistakes. Sometimes it is because we want to do too much a little too fast. We rush into things that we will regret sooner or later.

Unfortunately, the consequences of such precipitous actions cannot be undone. When a government makes a promise, such as a slight \$10-billion deficit, and then realizes that it did not look at the books properly and that its promises will cost Canadians a fortune, it cannot break its promise. It has to live with that and try to explain to Canadians why a slight deficit is now a huge one. Actions and words cannot be undone. There is no going back. It is a broken promise.

• (1130)

Fortunately, there is still time for the government to avoid making a mistake with Bill C-6. I would like to take the Minister of Immigration up on his offer. Yesterday, he said, "We do not claim perfection." We suspected as much. Then he said, "If some members on the committee, of any party, have ideas for how to improve it, we would be open to such suggestions."

Here is my idea. I urge the government not to rush this, to take its time and listen to the official opposition's point of view on this bill.

For example, yesterday, the member for Calgary Nose Hill gave the minister some excellent suggestions based on her personal experience as the daughter of immigrants who chose Canada. I invite all of my colleagues to read her story and her reasons for opposing many aspects of Bill C-6.

My hon. colleague was quite eloquent, and there was a great deal of wisdom in her comments. She said:

My concern with the bill is that it puts the cart before the horse in a lot of ways. It looks at issues that perhaps are not of the utmost concern with regard to immigration policy in Canada. I hope we can come to some sort of consensus because this is something that is going to affect our country over the next 10 years.

Those are wise words of openness and collaboration that our critic said here in the House yesterday. The government still has a chance to show wisdom by taking the necessary time to introduce a bill on citizenship that will help maintain the high standards of Canadian citizenship.

What are we to make of a bill that allows an individual to keep his citizenship after he has been found guilty of terrorism and wanting to kill and spread fear in his adopted country? Is that the type of bill that should be hastily passed without consultation? Since the beginning of the session, every time there is talk about reform, we have heard, "We will consult Canadians on electoral reform, we will consult Canadians on the budget, we will consult Canadians, we made promises, and we will consult Canadians on those promises as well."

It is good to want to consult Canadians, but sometimes, in other cases, the government says, "This is how it is. We are not holding consultations, we made a promise and we are taking immediate action to forget the bad years of the Conservatives".

In this case, the government members would do well to consult people and listen. As the minister suggested in his speech yesterday, they should take the time to listen to the official opposition and understand the issues behind this decision to abolish Bill C-24 in the way that they have done.

Canada continues to be one of the safest countries in the world. That is why thousands of people from around the world choose us as a safe haven. However, Canada will not be a safe haven to anyone who wants to destroy it through violence and hatred. We need to send this very clear, straightforward message to anyone who wants to become a Canadian citizen.

To be Canadian means to want success for all one's fellow Canadians, regardless of race, gender, religion, beliefs, or culture. That is what it means to be Canadian. There is only one type of Canadians: those who share these values, as every one of us here in the House does.

• (1135)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech and for his appreciation of the debates and discussions we have been having so far in this 42nd Parliament. However, I do want to ask him a question.

Most rights and freedoms advocacy groups and civil liberties organizations, such as the Barreau du Québec, the Canadian Bar Association, Amnesty International, and the Canadian Council for Refugees, questioned the validity of the Conservatives' Bill C-24 in terms of complying with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and international law. I find that troubling.

Government Orders

How does my colleague explain the fact that the Conservative bill created two classes of citizens? People with dual citizenship risked losing their Canadian citizenship, although people with only Canadian citizenship could not lose theirs.

How can he support such a discriminatory principle that creates two classes of citizens?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, there is only one class of Canadian citizens: Canadians who share the values that I mentioned earlier in my speech.

We do not have two classes of Canadians. Canadian citizens who share our values of compassion, freedom, and equality, no matter their gender or race, are Canadian citizens. However, I am not tolerant of people who come to Canada and attack these very values by carrying out acts that are absolutely abominable and violent.

If I understand the NDP member's question correctly, he is asking me whether, under the law, the bill would have withstood a court or other challenge. The government did not let the justice system have its say, and the government already wants to rescind the bill. Thus, someone found guilty of committing an act of terrorism will regain his citizenship.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to briefly comment on the arguments made by my colleague opposite.

As we know, immigration is important to Canada. History bears this out. Everyone recognizes that having Canadian citizenship is an exceptional value. Defending these exceptional values means that we treat everyone equally. When someone becomes a Canadian, there are not two classes of citizenship.

When a Canadian citizen commits a crime, the justice system must come into play. When the criminal is found guilty, he is sent to prison.

If I have understood correctly, my colleague prefers to remove from Canada people who are against the country, by creating two classes of citizenship. They are returned to another country so they can do even more harm to our country. Personally, I believe that the legal system is very capable of sending these people to prison. What does my colleague think of that situation? Is that his solution?

• (1140)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I have been hearing the same arguments since this discussion began. The government plans to solve the problem of terrorism by putting terrorists in prison. I would not be surprised to hear the members opposite tell us that they are going to gather up all the terrorists and put them in prison in order to solve the problem. Those are their sunny ways, but things do not work like that.

We are not talking about just any crime. We are talking about terrorism and treason committed by people who want to attack Canadians and their values. That is their specific goal. I do not see what is wrong with saying that these people are not real Canadian citizens. They do not want to be Canadians. People who want to become Canadians are people who want to share Canadian values, values of openness. They are not people who want to attack everyone.

[English]

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I noticed this morning that the Liberals and the NDP are talking about one small component of this bill. That makes me think they do not feel very good about the rest of the bill, primarily the requirement about living in the country for at least 183 days 4 out of 5 years, and filing an income tax return. Also, they are going to repeal the intent to reside provision. I think most Canadians would expect that to be a basic threshold.

Could the member comment on that, because it seems as if the Liberals and the NDP really do not want to talk about that today?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree. People who want to become Canadian want to contribute to the country. In my riding, we enjoy welcoming people and love having them move to our area. There are not very many immigrants in my riding of Mégantic—L'Érable because the town is not very big. However, the immigrants who do move there have talents and skills that we want to make the most of. People who want to come to Canada want to stay here. The requirements were completely reasonable, and I do not see why anyone would want to come here only to leave again. It is therefore legitimate to have some kind of minimum. In that regard, there was nothing wrong with Bill C-24.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by outlining my family history to some degree. My grandparents both immigrated from the Netherlands separately and were married in Canada. They went on to produce a large family of 10 children. I have over 80 cousins from that set of grandparents. They have been a very productive Canadian family.

I would like to thank and recognize in particular two of my aunts who worked tirelessly on my campaign. I would not be standing here today without their help, that is for sure.

I rise today to discuss the integrity of some of the proposed changes to our Citizenship Act. The previous Conservative government brought in Bill C-24, the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act. The measures enacted in Bill C-24 reinforced the value of Canadian citizenship and gave us a means to protect our country and citizens by revoking citizenship of dual nationals convicted of terrorism, high treason, and certain spying offences, or who have taken up arms against Canada.

A NRG poll of over 1,000 Canadians showed that 83% of Canadians and 85% of immigrants to Canada supported revoking citizenship from convicted terrorists. Many groups representing new Canadians endorsed the bill as well.

We believe that new Canadians enrich and strengthen our country. Their experiences and perspectives as immigrants strengthen an important part of who we are as a nation. They are the strength of our nation's future. We want newcomers to Canada to have every opportunity to succeed and to have opportunities for economic success.

Government Orders

A constituent of mine, Ray Galas, a hay farmer from northern Alberta, called me yesterday. He wants the government to focus on the economy so that newcomers arriving in Canada have every opportunity to contribute to our great country. A strong Alberta makes a strong Canada, a place for all to succeed.

We also want newcomers to experience many of our freedoms. All the new Canadians agree that we want to experience safe communities. Dual nationals convicted of terrorism erode the public safety we all cherish.

There are choices when it comes to penalizing dual nationals who are convicted of terrorism. One of them is jail. Revoking the right of citizenship is a penalty that fits the crime. The legislation that the Liberals seek to repeal allowed Canada to revoke the citizenship of the convicted terrorist Zakaria Amara, a member of the Toronto 18. Members may remember that Mr. Amara was sentenced to life in prison after admitting to his role in the plan to attack sites in Toronto. He was convicted of knowingly contributing to a terrorist group for the purpose of enhancing the ability of the group to carry out an act of terror.

In 2007, Canada revoked the citizenship of two Nazi war criminals, enforcing the principle that Canada will not be a safe haven for anyone convicted of war crimes, genocide, or crimes against humanity.

The Liberals want to strike down this law. Canadian citizens have a responsibility to embrace Canadian values. A part of this responsibility that we all share as citizens is the special responsibility for the preservation of the principles of democracy and human freedom. These are cornerstones of our nation.

We are a law-abiding, generous, and compassionate country. The measures in the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act were enacted to better protect our country and better combat the ongoing threat that countries worldwide are grappling with. Most of our peer countries have similar legislation in place.

I would point out that Bill C-6 is the Liberals' first bill dealing with immigration and public safety. It is extremely worrying that under this legislation, dual national citizenship cannot be revoked for the commission of an act of terrorism, but can be revoked for fraud. We are concerned about the Liberals' lack of focus. The ability to revoke the citizenship of dual nationals who are convicted of terrorism and similar offences is a sound, good, and commonsense law. It is law that helps to maintain the integrity of Canadian citizenship. We do not support the Liberals' attempt to weaken our country. We will continue to push to keep our country one of the best countries in the world.

•(1145)

Another component that concerns me is the removal of the requirement for an applicant to continue to reside in Canada if granted citizenship. The intention-to-reside provision likely does not restrict the mobility rights guaranteed under the charter. What it does do is reinforce the expectation that citizenship is for those who intend to make Canada their permanent home. This is not an unreasonable expectation. We want to ensure that citizenship applicants maintain strong ties to Canada.

There is a reason that Canadian citizenship is the most sought after citizenship in the world. We have a reputation as one of the best places to live, a place where jobs, security, hope, and freedom are available to all. Every year we receive thousands of applications from people who want to live here. We hope that those seeking Canadian citizenship intend to bring their personal experiences and contributions to our nation, just as many of the preceding immigrants did during the course of our nation's history.

The sum of our experiences has made us a better country. We hope that future immigrants will also contribute to our nation and enrich our country by residing here. It is disappointing that the Liberals have chosen to focus on the intent-to-reside provision when there are more pressing issues facing us in immigration, such as the shortage of applications from skilled labour immigrants.

There is another component of Bill C-6 that gives us cause for concern. That is the provision that reduces the number of days during which a person must be physically present in Canada before applying for citizenship. Currently, the physical presence requirement is fulfilled if an applicant resides in Canada for only 183 days in four out of six years prior to making a citizenship application. The Liberal government proposes to change the physical presence requirement to three out of five years before the date of application.

The Conservative Party believes that stringent residency requirements promote integration and a greater attachment to Canada. We are opposed to any provision that weakens the integrity of Canadian citizenship, and we recommend that this component be struck from the bill.

Another component of Bill C-6 seeks to prevent applicants from being granted citizenship while serving conditional sentences, or allowing such time to count towards meeting the physical presence requirements for citizenship. We agree that these measures are reasonable and we support this component of the bill.

We also support the provision that all applicants must continue to meet the requirements of citizenship until they take the oath, regardless of when their application was received.

The Conservative Party believes that the strength of our nation lies in the strength of our citizens. Gaining citizenship by means of fraud undermines our nation and leaves us vulnerable. We support the component that gives citizenship officers the authority to seize fraudulent documents provided during the administration of the act, including during in-person interviews and hearings. The integrity of our Citizenship Act is not something we can take for granted.

If we allow dual nationals who are convicted of terrorism to remain Canadian citizens, we weaken our public safety. If we reduce the number of days during which a person must be physically present in Canada before applying for citizenship, we weaken integration within Canada.

In closing, we will examine the bill in detail, but we are extremely concerned about these changes.

•(1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am following this debate closely.

Government Orders

It is important to remember that all citizens are equal before the law. I do not understand why the Conservatives insist on staying the course. Many experts, including the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, Amnesty International, the Canadian Council for Refugees, and the Barreau du Québec, have said that this law violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and is probably unconstitutional.

Why do the Conservatives insist on keeping this bill, which was truly harmful? I want to commend the Liberals, who have finally adopted our position that the same laws should apply to everyone. This is a step in the right direction, but there is still work to be done.
[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, it appears that the member asking the question is concerned about the revocation of citizenship, which is indeed very serious. When we are revoking the citizenship of a fellow Canadian, it is something that we definitely take seriously.

However, we already have two other instances that have allowed the revocation of citizenship in the past, cases of fraud and the commission of war crimes. If we were worried about revocation, he would be advocating that we would not revoke anyone's citizenship.

One of the other key words in his question was the word "probably". He said that the Canadian Bar Association said it was probably unconstitutional. I will repeat my fellow colleague's concerns earlier that this has never gone before the courts, so when he states this is probably unconstitutional, he is being completely speculative.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech and the excellent work he does.

I would like to talk about the previous government's experience.
[*English*]

We have heard so much misinformation from the other side about the government's record. We know that under our government, we had the highest sustained immigration levels in this country's history. We also demonstrated a strong respect for diversity. When we were in government, we had the most diverse caucus at that time in Canadian history. Yet the government is running away from talking about the provisions of the bill and simply wants to repeat over and over again the importance of diversity, which is not a subject on which we disagree.

Could the member highlight our record in government and why it is important that diversity be attached as well to common shared values?

• (1155)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, diversity is definitely one of our strengths in Canada. When we go anywhere in Canada, we will find people who have come from every part of the world.

In the northern part of my riding in Alberta there are significant French-speaking communities. I have a large community with a German background in another section and I also have a large Muslim community in Slave Lake. It does not matter what part of

Canada we come from: we have a diverse population, and it is our shared heritage.

It is great that we can attract people from around the world to bring their strengths to our country, and also their cuisine. That is one of my favourite parts of this diverse nation. We can go down the street and eat food from around the world.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to know whether he is concerned about the fact that the Conservatives' bill created two classes of citizens: those who could lose their Canadian citizenship and those who, like me, have only Canadian citizenship and could not be subject to the type of punishment found in Bill C-24.

Does the member think it is right that there should be two classes of citizens?

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, there are not two levels of citizenship in Canada. Canadian citizenship is Canadian citizenship. What we are concerned about is people who take violent actions against our country. These people have not demonstrated that they share Canadian values, and we are saying that they were never Canadian if that is what they are willing to do.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour and pleasure to rise in the House today to speak about the government's plan to repeal provisions in the Citizenship Act. As this is a concern relating to citizenship, which is so central to Canadian identity, and matters of immigration, which are essential to the Canadian story, it is especially an honour for me, as the son of immigrants, to be here today.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Davenport.

As the provisions only apply to Canadians with dual or multiple citizenships, they contribute to the creation of a two-tiered system. It is unacceptable in a democratic society that dual or multiple nationals are vulnerable to losing their citizenship.

This is a point that was raised time and again by stakeholders and private individuals when the previous legislation, Bill C-24, was first introduced.

Groups were as varied as the Canadian Bar Association, the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, and Amnesty International. I would like to quote a few of these concerns.

David Matas of B'nai Brith, who testified before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration stated that:

We should not be revoking the citizenship of Canadians for crimes committed after the acquisition of citizenship, no matter what the crime.

I want to emphasize that point that Mr. Matas made.

I will continue with his quote:

Government Orders

Once a person becomes a Canadian citizen and commits a crime, then he is our criminal. We should not pretend otherwise.

Barbara Jackman, speaking on behalf of the Canadian Bar Association, stated before the same committee that:

For people who are born here and who have grown up here, it can result in banishment or exile.

She went on to observe that we punish people through the criminal justice system.

In its submission to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on Bill C-24, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants stated that, in its view:

Treating dual citizens differently is discriminatory and violates the fundamental principle that all citizens are equal. Citizens should not face different consequences for committing the same crimes. Creating separate rules for dual citizens creates a two-tiered citizenship, with lesser rights for some citizens.

These are just a few of the many examples of organizations and individuals publicly expressing their view that the revocation measures created two different kinds of citizenship.

Many of my constituents in London North Centre have told me that this is unacceptable. I heard it throughout the election campaign, and I have heard it since. There is great support for this bill in London North Centre. My constituents want all Canadians to be treated fairly and with a high level of respect. London, Ontario, was built on immigration, and many Londoners hold dual or multiple citizenship. These are extremely proud Canadians who value and respect this beautiful country. We have an obligation to be fair and respectful to them, as well.

Our government has listened to these concerns and Bill C-6 clearly addresses them.

No government should ever have the ability to take away an individual's Canadian citizenship. Any Canadian who commits a crime ought to be punished. There is no debate on that point, at all, on this side of the House and, I am happy to say, with my hon. colleagues in the NDP.

However, the revocation of citizenship crosses a line that we must never accept. Without citizenship, the rights and equality we all enjoy become meaningless. Canada is a country that prides itself on solid democratic principles and foundations and is an example for other nations. However, playing fast and loose with the definition of citizenship is a very slippery slope and inevitably calls into question our leadership in this area.

I again point to the importance of my constituents. I am here to represent them and I want to reference what I have heard on the ground, as their MP.

● (1200)

I have heard loud and clear from my constituents in London North Centre that fair treatment of all Canadians and dedication to the principles of democracy, tolerance, and equality are what they expect in their elected officials and, more than this, in the Government of Canada.

I would also like to add that, while this position reflects my stand and that of our government, it was a former Conservative prime

minister, John Diefenbaker, who held this view, and I am glad to continue that point in the debate that will follow, I assume.

By introducing this bill, we are taking concrete steps to return to a system where all citizens are treated equal, regardless of whether they are dual or multiple nationals. This is a commitment my party made before forming government, and we are following through now. This is a matter of principle and fundamental values for us. There should be one tier, only one tier, of Canadian citizenship.

I have no doubt that members in the House are concerned about security, and I want to turn to that point now for a moment. I can assure all of them that we remain unwavering in our commitment to protect the safety and security of Canadians. Canadians convicted of treason and terrorism will be dealt with through our justice system. As the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has stated, we have courts and prisons in Canada, and offenders will not go unpunished.

As well, there are measures in place before someone becomes a citizen. A person may be denied a visa or other travel document, refused entry to, or removed from Canada for security reasons or criminal activity, preventing him or her from becoming a citizen. Furthermore, prohibition grounds in the Citizenship Act remain in effect, barring individuals convicted of certain offences or engaged in activities against the national interest from acquiring citizenship in the first place.

Moreover, repealing the national interest grounds would not affect the ability to revoke citizenship where it was obtained fraudulently. The minister would continue to have authority to revoke citizenship in basic fraud cases. Furthermore, the Federal Court would continue to have authority to decide on cases where the fraud is in relation to a fact regarding security, human or international rights violations, or organized criminality. The ability to revoke citizenship where it was obtained fraudulently has been in place since the first Canadian Citizenship Act came into force in 1947, and it will continue to be in place.

Three additional proposed amendments included in this bill would further enhance the integrity of the citizenship program. The first is to include conditional sentence orders in the prohibitions provisions. The second is to ensure that the need for applicants to meet citizenship requirements, from the time their grant of citizenship is approved to the time they take the oath, applies to all applicants. The third would provide authority for the minister to seize documents that are fraudulent or are being used fraudulently when provided for the administration of the Citizenship Act.

As we have emphasized, Canada's commitment to diversity and inclusion is an essential, powerful, and ambitious approach to make Canada and the world a better and safer place. A Canadian is a Canadian, and that must never change.

Bill C-6 would bring us closer to putting this principle into action and to remaining the open, tolerant, and diverse country that we have been throughout our history and, I hope, we will continue to be.

Government Orders

●(1205)

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member for London North Centre on his remarks. I know he is well qualified to talk about this issue and he has a genuine interest in safety, justice, and security for all Canadians. He has worked tirelessly on several different aspects, and I credit him for that, and I applaud him.

He recently tabled a private member's bill on non-state torture. I wonder if he could tell us if there is any connection between his private member's bill and Bill C-6. Maybe he could also tell us a little about his private member's bill, how we might apply that here and support it, and if there are any connections and parallels.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity, and I thank my hon. colleague.

My private member's bill, Bill C-242, proposes an addition to the Criminal Code of a charge of inflicting torture. We do have a charge on the books now as it stands in our Criminal Code, which is a torture offence that applies to acts of torture carried out by state officials, but there is no offence in our Criminal Code that would recognize equivalent acts carried out by private individuals operating in the private realm, who are not state officials. This has happened in the past, and there are many instances and examples.

The bill I have proposed is a measure to boost the public safety of Canada, but also to do so in a way that underlines human rights principles and enshrine those further in the Criminal Code of Canada. When we protect human rights, we increase public safety.

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in article 5, condemns torture. Our Criminal Code condemns torture but only in part, and it needs to go one step further.

I thank my hon. colleague for allowing me to sum up the bill for colleagues who might not know about it at this stage.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that my NDP colleagues and I are very pleased that the Liberals introduced this bill because, from the beginning, we were strongly opposed to the Conservatives' Bill C-24, which created two classes of Canadians among immigrants. It contained many harmful and probably unconstitutional measures.

However, there are still many things that need to be improved. Do the Liberals plan to reduce fees for families in their next budget? For a family of four, for example, the fees are now almost \$1,500. That decreases opportunities and makes it more difficult for immigrant families to become Canadian citizens.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, in this party we believe in public consultation. The Minister of Finance, along with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance carried out many consultations throughout the country. Individual MPs, including me and my colleagues around me, carried out these consultations in their own ridings. We have presented reports to the Department of Finance and to the Minister of Finance in particular, and these will be reviewed.

I thank my hon. colleague across the way for raising this issue. It is a matter that deserves scrutiny and I am sure will be looked at, but this is all part of the process. We are listening to Canadians and colleagues across the way, and these suggestions will certainly be reviewed.

●(1210)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important debate, because we are talking about Canadian identity and whether we would require, for those who are going to remain citizens, that they buy into a certain basic set of principles, like not being involved in terrorism.

I will read a quote from the Prime Minister and ask the hon. member if he agrees. The Prime Minister told *The New York Times*, "There is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada". He also said that we are the "...first postnational state".

I wonder if the member agrees with the Prime Minister about Canada having no core identity.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, the member ought to look again, because the Prime Minister has said that Canadian identity is based around fundamental values: freedom, tolerance, and democracy. This is what Canada is about.

I would go one step further and remind my hon. colleague, since he is apparently fond of looking at quotations from prime ministers, that it was a Conservative prime minister, Mr. John Diefenbaker, who in fact changed the law in 1958 so that no Canadians could have their citizenship taken away from them.

I would underline that point to the hon. member and simply say that the history of the Conservative Party, at least in the past, was to stand up for basic democratic principles and values. Mr. Diefenbaker did it. Why can the current Conservative Party not do it?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak to Bill C-6.

Like my colleague from London North Centre, I too proudly come from immigrant parents, and so immigration policy that creates clear paths to citizenship is very important to me. It is a bill that I believe will positively influence my riding of Davenport where I have, blessedly, a very high number of immigrants who come from many different cultures, and that lends to the wonderful diversity not only of my riding but of our city and indeed our country.

This Liberal government is committed to a Canada that is both diverse and inclusive. Canadians know that our government recognizes that historically we are strong because of our diversity and not in spite of it. We also know we have to get immigration policy right and create clear, compassionate, and fair paths to citizenship if we are to have a healthy economy moving forward.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship have been clear from the outset: flexibility and diversity are going to be crucial to our future as a country and indeed what we offer the world. We want to encourage that diversity and take steps to ensure that the path to citizenship is a flexible and fair one, but also one that encourages all Canadians to take pride in being Canadian.

Government Orders

Speaking to an audience at the Canadian High Commission in London shortly after taking office, the Prime Minister eloquently stated:

Compassion, acceptance, and trust; diversity and inclusion—these are the things that have made Canada strong and free. Not just in principle, but in practice.

Those of us who benefit from the many blessings of Canada's diversity need to be strong and confident custodians of its character.

It is a strong attachment to Canada and to those values of compassion, progress, opportunity, and justice that we hold dear and that lead citizens to be strong and confident custodians of our national character.

Critics of the measures outlined in Bill C-6 may say that the greater flexibility these changes would bring would diminish an attachment to Canada and to our shared values as Canadians, creating so-called citizens of convenience. Being Canadian is a privilege and an honour. Few of us would dispute that.

However, far from diminishing the value of Canadian citizenship, the measures in Bill C-6 would in fact increase and foster a greater attachment to Canada. What is even more important is that in introducing Bill C-6, there is a message that we in the Liberal government are sending, and that is different than that of the former government. The message is that we recognize, with the exception of our indigenous community, that everyone in Canada at some point was an immigrant to our great country and that we value our immigrants. We feel lucky that there are so many people who want to create a home in Canada, who want to contribute to Canada, and who want to do their part to create an even better Canada.

Bill C-6 would support the government's goal of making it easier for immigrants to build successful lives in Canada. The Citizenship Act will continue, and has continued, to have several measures that contribute to deepening attachment to Canada, deterring citizenships of convenience, ensuring program integrity, and combatting fraud. All Canadians should be treated equally, regardless of whether they were born in Canada, naturalized, or hold citizenship in another country. As the Prime Minister has said, and is now quoted way too often, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.

Critics may also point to changes to the age range for language proficiency and citizenship knowledge testing as another way that attachment to Canada would be lessened. However, this government understands that for younger and older applicants this is a barrier to citizenship. Indeed, in my riding of Davenport, for whatever reason, many residents have remained permanent residents for years and decades and have waited until they have reached 55 years of age to become a Canadian citizen. It could be that while most of them have worked most of their adult lives in Canada and contributed to the Canadian economy and society, they are still not comfortable with their language level and lack the confidence to take the language test currently required to become a Canadian citizen. However, Bill C-6 would bring the age range and knowledge requirements back to 18 to 54, and I applaud that. I know the residents in Davenport will also applaud these changes.

•(1215)

The Liberal government believes in the importance of having adequate knowledge of one of Canada's official languages, and understanding the responsibilities and privileges associated with

being a citizen of our country. Adults aged 18 to 54 will still be required to provide evidence of their proficiency in English or French and to pass a citizenship test.

These changes will not put newcomers at a disadvantage. Younger applicants will acquire knowledge of Canada and official language capability through their schooling, which is excellent.

Older adults applying for citizenship will find support to be knowledgeable about Canada and to speak its official languages through a wide variety of services offered across the country. This flexibility will help children, their parents, and grandparents achieve citizenship, an important step that will allow immigrants to gain a deeper sense of belonging to our society and to become more active citizens.

An important way that we will accelerate attachment to Canada is by allowing time spent residing in Canada before becoming a permanent resident to count toward citizenship requirements. The Citizenship Act would be amended to allow each day within the five years preceding their application that a person was physically present as a temporary resident or protected person before becoming a permanent resident to be counted as a half day toward meeting the physical presence requirement for citizenship, up to a maximum of one year.

Moreover, every day a person was physically present in Canada as a permanent resident will count as one day of physical presence for citizenship. This means an applicant could accumulate up to 365 days as a temporary resident or a protected person. They could accumulate the remaining 730 days as a permanent resident to meet the 1,095 days of physical presence required to become a citizen.

This acknowledges that post-secondary students who come to this country to study often find Canada a great place to stay and build their career. Indeed, there are many of these wonderful students in my riding of Davenport. They are extraordinary people, and it would be a blessing to have them want to apply to become a Canadian citizen. If they choose to stay in Canada, it is because they have developed an affection and an attachment to this country, whether because of work, family, or opportunities.

They have started to build their lives here, benefiting our communities and, indeed, our country as a whole. We should acknowledge, encourage, and be grateful for the choice they have made to make Canada their home. Their experience in Canada matters. Their decision to come to Canada, build a new life and home here, and contribute to building our great nation matters as well.

Treating our immigrants well and creating viable, fair, compassion paths to citizenship are matters of principle to the government. Canadians are proud of our country and our values. We welcome immigrants. We help them settle, integrate, and succeed. This is our history, our present, and our future.

Government Orders

Whether newcomers arrive as refugees, family members, or ethnic immigrants, their contributions to Canada and those of the generations to follow will be positive. Our current and future economy depends on us getting our immigration policy right. Bill C-6 is just a first step of what I hope will be many more steps to come in reforming our immigration system.

We encourage all immigrants to take the path of full membership in Canadian society. One of the strongest pillars for successful integration to Canadian life is achieving citizenship. With that in mind, I encourage all of my hon. colleagues to join me in supporting Bill C-6.

• (1220)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a former mayor of my city where 95 languages are spoken and the largest number of government assisted refugees call home, I am more than aware of the immigration issues. I am more than aware of the contribution immigrants make to my city, province, and the country overall.

However, we are not talking about that. Every member in the House supports immigration to all countries and all people who want to make Canada their home. The issue is when an individual comes to Canada and is convicted of a terrorist act, something like we saw in Paris.

The provision to revoke citizenship is still in place for fraud, but the terrorism has been taken out. Could the member tell us if the provision for terrorism is one that she supports in terms of the immigration policy of her government?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I will answer the question two ways.

First, my grandparents came to our country in the 1950s and they had a clear path to citizenship. Therefore, for me, part of the bill is about creating that clear path for citizenship. We are reducing the number of days that people have to be here to become permanent residents, thus be on their way to be a Canadian citizen.

When we facilitate those who have been permanent residents, the age they have to be to take a language test to become a Canadian citizen is creating a clear path to citizenship and allows a quicker route for those who want to help build a greater Canada.

On the issue of what I call the first part of the bill, I mentioned in my speech that we often have said that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. There is a very clear belief on behalf of the government that if individuals are Canadian citizens and if they are convicted, whether it is of treason or of some sort of major crime, we have a court system to deal with that. We do not deport those Canadians to another country for them to be dealt with there. We will work on ensuring that we have a strong criminal system here, that we will deal with criminals appropriately here and deal with them in as fair a manner as possible.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a great interest in the reforms that have been brought forward. I have three university campuses in my riding, and my incredible staff in my constituency office has had student after student coming to us. They were foreign students. They graduated

and got their degrees, a lot of them engineers, and they had a lot to offer our country.

I remember one particular case with a foreign student looked forward to becoming a Canadian but he did not yet have his citizenship. He had a job offer from an engineering company, but he would be temporarily based in the states. He could not take the job because we did not credit his time in the country while he was studying and becoming acquainted with Canada. Therefore, I am very supportive of those measures.

Yes, the Liberals are making some good legislative changes, reversing the bad law that the Conservatives put through, but could the member tell us if the government is also committed to ending the lengthy wait times and the huge backlog, particularly in family reunification? We have case after case in my constituency office which are just heartbreaking. Family reunification and citizenship could be better expedited.

• (1225)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I, too, share the same concerns as the hon. member opposite. As I mentioned at the end of my speech, Bill C-6 is the first step of what I hope will be many more steps to come in reforming our immigration system.

Our Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has been very clear. He is also very worried about the wait times. He is preoccupied. It is a matter of importance to him right now and it is something he is working on dealing with as soon as possible.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

I am pleased that Bill C-6 is moving through the House of Commons. As New Democrats, it is not exactly all that we want, but at least it will result in some movement on a number of different initiatives that have not only hurt this country economically, socially, and culturally, but also hurt the individuals we need to be a successful country.

I come from a riding that has over 100 organized ethnic cultures that have been part of the foundation of our border town, which basically has a third of the nation's trade go through it a day. It also has some of the most diverse areas. It is where the War of 1812 took place and was the end of the Underground Railroad, where people came to Canada to escape slavery in the United States. A number of times we contested bounty hunters coming into Canada to remove individuals back to the United States to collect a bounty and return them to slave owners. In many respects we had become a refuge against the acts and activities that we, as a part of the British empire at that time, clearly viewed as needing to change, such as the slave trade. That opposition of ours is very much a part of our cultural element. Although we were geographically large, at that time we were a small colonial country in terms of population. We were standing in the wings of the United States and offering something called freedom against its very controversial republic of union and the southern states, which eventually led to the Civil War. It was quite a stand for the people, communities, and so forth, of our country to take at that time.

Government Orders

Therefore, when we talk today about the changes called for in Bill C-6, we must keep in mind that if we were to continue with the policy brought in under the Conservatives in Bill C-24, we would be harming our ability to be successful in the world.

I will point to a couple of local examples that are also somewhat national in nature because they happen in many other border town facilities.

We have not only had many immigrants and refugees come to our region and contribute in recent years, as we have discussed over the last two years with respect to Syrian refugees, but we have also had a steady stream of immigrants come into our region who have helped to build the national footprint of this country and make significant local progress on many different issues.

Bill C-24 was basically more than just a fly in the ointment with respect to the Canadian dream of being a multicultural country; it became adverse to our economy and to the families that we need because we do not have a growing population ourselves. It is the reality of our future.

It is interesting when I hear some pushback about this from certain members of the public who ask the honest and interesting questions they feel the need to ask, such as who will pay for their pensions in the future if we do not have skilled labour and other types of labour coming to contribute back to the Canadian economy.

Interestingly enough, in a border town like mine we have seen the harmful effects of the extension of days and time required to be spent in Canada before a residency gets completed. In my riding alone, the issue was so bad that we received a budget for a single position in my constituency to hire someone four days a week to deal with immigration itself. We are not funded for that position in the overall budgeting of the House of Commons, which is sad because we had a new Walker Road immigration facility open up in Windsor eight or nine years ago. It also had a room for ceremonies. People could go and get their file looked after and could get updates. That office was not only subject to staffing reductions by the past regime, but we have also seen it close to the public.

• (1230)

A number of people have English as a second language. Let us be clear on this. They may be doctors, engineers, or teachers. They come from all walks of life. Some are skilled workers, some are not. These people are trying to get information about their cases. They may have a spouse, children, or parents who do not know what the h-e-double hockey sticks is happening. That is unfortunate, because they are trying to move on with their lives. The process takes far too long. This has been a habitual problem since I have been here in Parliament. Hopefully the changes proposed in this legislation will improve this to some degree. I hope staffing levels will get augmented. Hopefully, the office will be opened up so that people can get processed quickly.

How would this affect people in Windsor West, Toronto, Montreal, northern Ontario, or any other place in Canada? Employment will be delayed for these people. Their contributions back into our tax system will be delayed. Ironically, over 10,000 workers cross over to the Detroit region every day because that city is short of skilled labour. Some of these people are doctors, nurses, accountants,

and marketing consultants. A lot of them have value-added skills, but their skills are not recognized in Canada. Some of these people have degrees but they cannot practise here. They cannot use their experience here. They can do so in the United States.

Thousands of people in the health care industry go over to the United States. These are doctors and nurses and other types of health care professionals. If Canadians need urgent hospital care, they are sent to Detroit to get help. We will pay a premium here in Canada for them to be treated by Canadians working in Detroit who are not allowed to practise their skills in our country. We pay a premium to send individuals over there, where they quite likely will receive treatment from people who have been denied a licence to practise here in Canada.

These delays in our immigration policy over the last number of years and the issue with Bill C-24 have created a shroud around families that makes it difficult for them to contribute.

I listened with interest to the previous speaker who said that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. I was at the U.S. embassy with Raymond Chrétien, who was the ambassador at that time. It was the first time an announcement was made that five countries would be put on a watch list. People who were granted Canadian citizenship but came from a third country might be exposed to fingerprinting and having their picture taken and other security checks done. I argued about this at the time, but to this day nothing has ever been done about it. That was the first step that took place. A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian was not the case. We now have two-tier citizenship. We need to change that policy as well, and we can work toward that in the future.

Bill C-6 provides us with an opportunity to work on different things. We want to work on a few points contained in the legislation. It is not appropriate for the minister to unilaterally act with regard to someone's citizenship without judicial oversight. That is not appropriate in terms of an individual's rights. No minister of any political party should have that type of influence over a process that should be carried out in the courts. There should be accountability for the person, because he or she is a Canadian citizen. They should be entitled to their rights. We need to make sure that those rights are thoroughly reviewed, not only for them but for the rest of Canadian society.

• (1235)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Northumberland—Peterborough South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could the member opposite expand on why he believes it is so important for us as Canadians to say to the world that citizenship is important to us, that we respect the rights that go with that citizenship, and how much it means to those people we invite into our country to become Canadian citizens? Immigrants enhance our country. They have the capability to work and create opportunities in our country.

Government Orders

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, prior to having this job, one of my jobs was working with youth at risk, including new Canadians. It was through an HRDC grant under the Liberal government of the time that the program was created. It was at a not-for-profit agency that I was very proud to serve with at that time.

We had youth at risk. Basically, we had eight Canadians who were born in Canada who were making some poor decisions and had involved themselves in petty crimes, or had been expelled from school. There were a number of different issues there. Then we had another eight Canadians who had recently gone through the immigration process. Actually, some of them were still becoming Canadian citizens. We mixed them together in programs aimed at eliminating racism. We also ran a sand volleyball and a basketball program to get other youth off the streets and playing games, and not hanging out at the corner stores and parks doing unaccountable things.

What was important there was that we were able to fast-track those individuals into getting back to school and also finding employment. We had over a 90% success rate.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comment. I disagree with a few of his comments on Bill C-24. The bill really has not been around long enough to measure any of its impacts, positive or negative. I know he mentioned those in his speech.

The path to citizenship remains the same. It was just a little longer in our past bill compared to the bill proposed today. Why does he feel that the requirement is reasonable? Is it so unreasonable to live and work in this country 183 days a year in four out of six years? In addition to that, why are they taking out the clause to compel immigrants to live in the country? Part of being a citizen here is to live and work here, not to get citizenship and then go somewhere else. What would he like to say to that specific point in Bill C-6?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, when people come here, they leave family and friends behind. Those might include their parents who cannot care for themselves. It might include people in other jurisdictions and regions of a country, like Lebanon and other places, where they have to take care of people.

He is asking people to stay here four to six years for the potential hope of becoming a Canadian, and for them to leave everyone else in their lives behind, who may or may not be able to be cared for.

In my office, I get people with friends and family back home who are disabled. They come from countries where they do not even give them the same rights as other citizens, let alone having an income and a connection to their community. That, in itself, is very important.

Why do we want to fast-track them? It is actually not to fast-track them, but to do it at a better pace. It is because the quicker they can get integrated and build their lives in Canada, the stronger they will be for our communities. We see that through evidence-based reality when dealing with people. The sooner you bring them into the family, the sooner they contribute and the better it is for all of us.

• (1240)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, as he always speaks from the

heart in here. I know he has represented constituents well every single year he has been in this place.

I thank him for reminding us of family values. Where the former government used to stand for family values, I would like him to reiterate the importance of treating these people like human beings. Far too many times, immigrants to our country, waiting to get their citizenship, have had family members die and cannot even go to the funeral.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, real-life situations, like funerals, happen, and yes, people are barred. We are spending a lot of time trying to make that happen.

As for family reunification, when my grandfather came here from England after the Second World War, he brought his family right away after that. When my wife came here from Hong Kong, her family was able to bring other types of people who have since contributed through businesses, involvement in the economy, and in Canadian society.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to speak in support of Bill C-6 today, although I do feel that it falls short in a number of areas.

As has been said by several speakers here today and yesterday, most Canadians come from immigrant families, and many of us have stories of parents and grandparents who came to this country to ensure a better life for their children. My mother's family, the Munns, came from Scotland to Newfoundland in 1837, and I was very happy and honoured to hear the member for Avalon read a statement on Tuesday regarding my great-great-uncle John Munn, who came here in 1837 as a young entrepreneur and started Munn and Co., one of the greatest merchant companies in the storied history of Newfoundland, a company that was taken over by my great-grandfather, Robert Stewart Munn, in 1878.

My father's father, on the other hand, came from more humble beginnings, the slums of Bristol. He went to the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia in 1907, and I am proud to use the leather case that he was given by his colleagues when he left England. I use it in recognition of the courage that he showed in giving up his life in England and moving to the wild west over a century ago.

To my way of thinking, Bill C-6 and its attempt to fix some of the serious shortcomings in citizenship law in Canada is a very welcome step. I would like to talk about the provisions in this bill that repeal the parts of Bill C-24 that relate to people who hold dual citizenship in Canada.

Government Orders

During a very long election campaign, like everyone in the chamber, I talked to thousands of people across my riding. As we found out on election day, most of them were desperate for a change in government. When I spoke with citizens on their doorsteps or answered questions at forums, they had a long list of concerns with the former government, but what really surprised me about the depth of these concerns was the fact that many people actually knew the names and numbers of a couple of the bills that bothered them.

I was not so much surprised that they knew about Bill C-51, as there had been a number of local rallies in my area and the bill had been well covered in the news, but I was really surprised to find out how many people immediately named Bill C-24 as their biggest concern. It is not often people know the names and numbers of bills. They were particularly vehement in their discussions around its provisions for stripping people with dual citizenship of their Canadian citizenship. It did not matter that this bill supposedly targeted only terrorists and spies; when taken in context with Bill C-51, there was a lot of concern at the time over who might be considered a terrorist, a spy, or a traitor.

A couple of years ago, I attended a meeting of environmental activists in a church basement in the Okanagan Valley. Most of the people there were elderly folks who were worried about the impacts of oil tankers along the Pacific coast. They were learning the basics of door-to-door canvassing. We found out some years later that a federal agent had attended the meeting and that some of the volunteers were followed and photographed as they canvassed neighbourhoods.

The previous government clearly treated anti-pipeline activists as traitors, and Bill C-51 came close to legalizing that view. Who is to say what future governments may decide about the definition of these serious charges? That is why I am very happy to see that Bill C-6 will repeal those parts of Bill C-24 that created two kinds of Canadian citizens: those who were safely Canadian and those who could lose their citizenship at the whim of some future minister.

This section of Bill C-24 has been denounced by the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, Amnesty International, the Canadian Council for Refugees, and many respected academics. Many of these experts feel that Bill C-24 does not comply with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or international law. Like many other bills from the previous government, it was given a rather Orwellian doublespeak name. In this case it was called the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act, when it clearly did the opposite.

• (1245)

When we welcome immigrants to Canada and grant them citizenship, they become Canadians, citizens like every one of us here in this chamber. They deserve to be given the same rights of citizenship as all of us, whether or not they choose to retain the citizenship of another country.

On top of that, one has to wonder why we would want to strip people of their citizenship and deport them, even if they have been convicted of treasonous or terrorist acts. Would we want them plotting against Canada from some foreign country, where they could easily be drawn into terrorist groups to harm Canadians and

other citizens, or do we want them to be safely behind bars in prisons here in Canada?

I would like to turn now to talking about welcoming new immigrants. We all know the great benefits that immigrants bring to our country. Their hard work helps build this country, and we should remove unnecessary barriers to citizenship. I am happy to see that Bill C-6 begins to address some of these issues.

One of those barriers is the requirement that most new citizens be proficient in one of our two official languages. My daughter works in an immigrant support centre teaching English to refugees and new immigrants. Lately her classes have included refugees who have come to our region from Syria. I have met her students and can attest to their enthusiasm for learning English so that they can become fully integrated into the local community, get jobs, and become productive members of our society.

That said, I do support the provision in Bill C-6 that returns the age restriction to this requirement to 54 years of age, since older immigrants have strong family support and in turn are supporting their children's family at home. Many of these older immigrants have difficulty learning a new language and can contribute to Canadian society through their relationships with their children and other community members.

On that note, I would like to bring up the extreme difficulties just mentioned by my colleague that face young families of new Canadians who are trying to reunify their families and bring their parents to Canada.

I have had numerous representations, as I am sure many here have, from constituents who have been trying for years to bring parents to live with them in Canada. I have one family that has been trying for almost 10 years to bring their parents to join them in Canada. It breaks my heart to tell them that they have another six and a half years to wait. In the meantime, their parents are getting older and older. They do not think it is useful to continue the process because it is just so frustrating, so I hope the government acts on its promises to quickly clear up this backlog by replacing the present system with one that is fair and really works.

I would also like to note that many immigrant support centres across this country have had their federal funds cut over the past two years, making it difficult for these centres to help refugees and new immigrants get the language lessons and the other help they need to integrate into our communities.

To conclude, I urge the government to continue to remove unnecessary barriers to new immigrants in Canada, both through legislative action and through proper funding for immigrant support.

I would like to reiterate that Canada is a country of immigrants that should continue to welcome new Canadians from around the world. Bill C-24 was a giant step in the wrong direction, and Bill C-6 is a good step back toward making Canada a welcoming country, a country that we can all be proud of.

Government Orders

•(1250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate many of the member's comments on this bill. I think he will find a great deal of support and sympathy, not only for him but also for many individuals who are trying to be reunited with families.

He made reference to parents. One of the biggest frustrations that I and many of my colleagues have is the family reunification program to sponsor a spouse. That is another issue that we really do need to try to invest more in. We need to speed up that process. I believe the government is listening, and hopefully we will see more tangible actions on the issue of dealing with processing times.

In keeping with that, one of the things we need to recognize is that the bill would reduce the amount of time it takes to acquire citizenship. It was interesting that one question asked by a Conservative was about residency in four out of six years. What is not taken into account is the processing time for citizenship. That processing time grew under the Conservatives to over two years and to over six years in many of those cases.

We need to take a multi-faceted look at trying to deliver better service to those who want to get Canadian citizenship. Would the member not agree?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his comments, and I totally agree with him that we do need to remove these unnecessary barriers to citizenship, whether they are in the form of delays or in the form of onerous fees. To bring in a new family costs literally thousands of dollars. I believe this is unnecessary and onerous, so any common sense action that the government can take should be taken.

Another of my colleagues talked about students who come to Canada on student visas and want to stay here in Canada. We should make that path to citizenship easier for them. I believe that Bill C-6 would do that, which is why I am happy to speak in favour of the bill.

However, I still think there are more actions that should and can be taken.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member on his speech. He spoke with sincerity.

During the election campaign I too heard about Bill C-24. Obviously I was hearing different things. Members of my riding were supportive of the revocation of citizenship for acts of terrorism, treason, or espionage.

While I will congratulate the Liberals and the NDP on one thing, which is changing the narrative on the bill and making it seem to be more than it was, I was interested in the member's comments with respect to not supporting the revocation on the basis of treason, espionage, or terrorism.

Bill C-6, as it currently stands, does allow for the revocation of citizenship that has been gained through fraud. Could I ask the member why it is any less important to revoke citizenship for treason, terrorism, and espionage than it is for fraud?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, the clear difference is that this fraud we are talking about happens before the person becomes a citizen. They obtained their citizenship fraudulently. In the other case, a person is a legitimate, legal citizen of Canada, but as a result of their illegal actions, they would now be threatened with having their citizenship revoked. I think those are two very different things.

I would add, as my colleague previously noted, that we should ensure that any move to strip someone of citizenship, be it for fraud or whatever, should be done through the courts, so that they have proper representation and proper access to those things. It should not be done at the whim of a minister.

•(1255)

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the hon. member for Surrey Centre. It is a pleasure to be able to speak in support of Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act .

As the member of Parliament from a riding where immigration is the number one concern for many of my constituents, I am proud to support this bill. During my 11-week campaign and the two years leading up to it, I heard time and again of the issues that people were facing concerning bringing their loved ones to Canada, or their struggles in gaining citizenship while they were completing their residency requirements.

Since the good people of Brampton East sent me to this chamber, my constituency office has received over 400 cases, and 99% of them deal with immigration. They are families who have waited seven years to be reunited. There are thousands who have waited 18 months since they were married to begin their life together. There are genuine visitor visa cases that are being denied time and again. There are also PR holders who have filled out the application, met the residency requirements, and suffered under the unnecessary changes to the Citizenship Act made by the previous government.

I am the proud son of immigrants. My family's story is similar to that of many families across this great nation. My parents immigrated to Canada in the late 1970s in search of social and economic opportunities. They worked hard. My dad was a taxi cab driver, and my mom lifted boxes in a factory. My parents realized that in Canada anything was possible with a bit of hope and a lot of hard work. At the core of their story is the day that they became Canadian citizens. It was not just a document to them. For my parents, it was security and a sense of pride that they were finally part of the Canadian family. At the ceremony, they proudly sang *O Canada*, and called their relatives for a party to celebrate the occasion.

Time and again, my father tells me that I won the lottery by being born in Canada, that I am a Canadian citizen by birthright, and that being a Canadian citizen is the envy of the world. I could not agree with him more. When asked on the campaign trail how I enjoyed the process, I responded that I am living the Canadian dream.

Government Orders

Brampton East is the second-most diverse riding in the entire country. The strength of our country has always been our diversity and building upon one another's experiences. Yet, at the same time, no matter where we come from or what we believe, we are all united by our Canadian values.

A few weeks ago, I had the honour and privilege of welcoming our new Syrian brothers and sisters at Pearson International Airport. I had the opportunity to chat with some of them, and the hope and joy in their voices was priceless. They knew how special it was to come to Canada as permanent residents. One parent spoke about how her children would now have the opportunity to live out their dreams. One day, a young Syrian refugee will study hard, become a professional, gain citizenship, and become a member of Parliament and sit in this very House. His or her life story will be a story of the Canadian dream.

Day in and day out, my team in Brampton East helps our constituents understand the immigration process, helps them determine their eligibility, and supports them through any challenges they face. Gaining citizenship is a cherished goal for many of my constituents, as well as the associated objectives such as family unification, which our government is also improving upon.

When the previous government announced the changes to the Citizenship Act, it redefined the narratives of citizenship and what it meant to be a Canadian. As a result, it pitted Canadians against one another in the ugliest of ways in order to serve political purposes. This greatly affected the citizens of my riding, many of whom are first generation and second generation Canadians. Their families moved here with the hopes and dreams of building a secure and prosperous life in Canada and providing the best foundation for their children to contribute to Canadian society.

Bill C-24, introduced by the previous government, tore into these hopes and dreams, as well as the hard work my constituents had put into building successful lives for their families. It created a fear and discomfort that is not the norm for Canadian society, and it certainly should not be.

• (1300)

Former citizenship and immigration minister Chris Alexander defended this bill by arguing that citizenship is a privilege, not a right. Simply put, he is wrong. It may come with responsibilities, but citizenship is a right. Once legitimately acquired by birth or naturalization, it cannot be taken away.

Bill C-24 gave the government the kind of sweeping power that is common in dictatorships, not in a democracy built upon the rule of law where all citizens are equal. The previous government used national security as a justification for the bill, but Bill C-24 could easily have been used against Canadians who were innocent under the laws. That was the danger in the lack of clarity and overreaching scope of that bill. That is the slippery slope that we must avoid at all costs.

Under that bill, the only Canadians who could not lose their citizenship arbitrarily were those born in Canada who did not have another nationality. The double standard and inequality that the law inflicted was immediately obvious to most Canadians. Revoking citizenship is one of the most serious consequences that a society

may impose and should remain an exceptional process. It should be conducted with the highest degree of procedural fairness, as rightly noted by the Canadian Bar Association and the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association. We must trust our justice system to ensure that all criminals of Canadian nationality face the consequences of their actions, but that should not come at the expenses of their civil liberties.

I cannot say strongly enough how proud I am of the government for introducing Bill C-6, which aims to right the wrongs of Bill C-24 committed against dual citizens, potential dual citizens, and those looking to become citizens. Canada is, and always has been, and always will be, a country that opens its arms to others, whether it be immigrant families or our new Syrian refugee brothers and sisters. It is also in our nature to support these individuals to become integrated members of our society until they are settled and contributing to their community.

I would now like to focus on the importance of other parts of Bill C-6 that may not get as much attention.

I applaud the government for eliminating unjustified barriers to achieving citizenship. Allowing applicants to receive credit for the time they are legally in Canada before becoming permanent residents is a huge step in the right direction, if we value the talent and work ethic of the people who come to work or study in Canada. I am sure we have all met a bright, young international student with a promising career whom we would like to call Canada home, as we do. This improvement to the immigration system would create economic growth in communities, as we have the best and brightest of the world's population joining our workforce.

Allowing applicants to apply for citizenship one year sooner by reducing the number of days of physical presence has already been very well received in ridings like Brampton East.

Bill C-6 would correct a wrong. I am proud of the government for making this commitment during the campaign and now fulfilling its promise.

We can never forget that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech in good faith, but he lost me when he referred to the bill as common in a dictatorship.

I believe that shows lack of respect for this House. I believe it shows lack of respect for a parliamentary democracy. Every single member of this House is duly elected, and every government is duly elected to enact laws that it suggests are right for this country.

I would ask the member what he meant by that. I would also like to give him the opportunity to retract that statement. If we judge it by his standards, his government is a dictatorship as much as the previous one. It is a disgrace that he would say that in this House.

Government Orders

• (1305)

Mr. Raj Grewal: Madam Speaker, in the context of the statement that was made, it was the arbitrary notion of Bill C-24 that went to the core of what was wrong with that bill. It could unilaterally take away citizenship from any Canadian who held dual citizenship and was not born in this country. It was arbitrary. It was not fair.

I want to say to the member opposite that it was not a reference to the previous government. I apologize if he may have construed it in a way that I did not mean. I want to focus on the fact that Bill C-24 was arbitrary, not fair, and that it could unequivocally take away citizenship from people who did not deserve to fall under that law.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is obviously very passionate about the topic.

I am pleased to hear the hon. member raise the concern about lack of due process and rule of law. This is something that we stand for proudly in Canada. When I worked overseas in other countries, we tried to encourage them to move in that direction.

I am sad to say, though, that apparently this law still leaves some unilateral powers vested in the minister without a judicial hearing, and perhaps they will revisit that provision.

One thing I would like to raise is that it is one thing to improve the law, and as my colleague previously said, many of my constituents were also very concerned about Bill C-24 and will be pleased that I am standing here supporting changes in that law.

We are deeply concerned about the delays in bringing on immigration staff to expedite applications for family reunification and so forth. In my jurisdiction, we are now facing, for the second time, having no citizenship judge. We went through this a year ago. We had to wait a year for a citizenship judge, and now we are without one again.

What is the hon. member willing to do to get his party to employ people and get people appointed so that we can move on making people citizens of Canada?

Mr. Raj Grewal: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for a well thought-out question.

Like my hon. colleague mentioned, I have had a lot of experience since I have been elected on the topic of immigration. The long processing times for family unification, for PR applications, for citizenship applications, for spousal applications, is something that I hear on a daily basis. The government is correcting a wrong from over ten years.

Constituents in my riding are upset about the processing time, the lack of staff, the lack of citizenship judges in certain areas in the country. It is because there has been 10 years of mismanagement on the immigration file. It will not be corrected within five months. However, the government has a commitment to fix the immigration system so that it is fair, accountable, and transparent, and it works for all Canadians across the nation.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to hear about our government's reforms to immigration. I congratulate my colleague from Brampton East on his contribution to this important debate.

As a fellow Brampton MP, I ask the member how these very needed and welcomed changes to immigration will affect Bramptonians.

Mr. Raj Grewal: Madam Speaker, as my colleague from the city of Brampton knows, this will really help our citizens and constituents in our ridings. Processing times will be faster. People will be able to become citizens faster so they can contribute to Canadian society in a more meaningful way, and the application time will be reduced significantly.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is hard to speak after listening to my colleague from Brampton East with his passionate speech, but I will do my very best and attempt to emulate him.

Diversity, inclusion, immigration: these are pillars of this great country and should always inform any debate in this chamber. I am rising today to speak in support of this bill with these fundamentals in mind.

When this House considers a subject as important and as fundamental as citizenship, we should treat these debates with the importance they deserve. Today I am rising to support this bill. My constituents will be thrilled to hear that our government is addressing serious errors that Bill C-24 created, whether they were purposeful or not. I thank the minister for swiftly reversing these errors and addressing these concerns.

One of our nation's many pillars is the successful integration of immigrants into new Canadians. Our country is stronger because of our diversity, and our government encourages all immigrants to take the path to full and permanent membership in this country and Canadian society.

Bill C-6 achieves just that. These changes would provide newcomers to Canada more flexibility to help meet their requirements for citizenship. I know I am not alone in this House when I say that, day in and day out, as members of Parliament, we hear about the unique paths that newcomers have taken to end up here in Canada. A number of these paths have been filled with hardship, challenges, and roadblocks.

As a government, we have a responsibility to ease immigration to our country, especially when it comes to reuniting families with their loved ones. For the past number of years, we have seen processing times for applications balloon. Now, as a result, I hear about constituents in my riding who have waited not months but years for decisions on their applications.

Government Orders

My family's immigration story is similar to that of millions of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. It is a story I share with many of constituents in my riding of Surrey Centre. My father, Mohan Singh Sarai, emigrated here from India in 1959, 57 years ago, and my mother, Amrik Kaur Sarai, emigrated in 1969. They came to this country to participate fully in Canadian society. My brothers are transportation workers, sawmill workers, and truck drivers, and one is a postman, all active in their communities, coaching, volunteering, or working in community kitchens around the great province of British Columbia.

I look around this chamber, and I know that many have similar stories to tell, and that is exactly what makes this place and country so great. The government recognizes that newcomers often begin building an attachment to this country long before they become permanent residents. This includes students who study in our great institutions, such as Simon Fraser University and Kwantlen Polytechnic University in my riding.

They would now receive credit for their time while they study in schools in our great land. This bill proposes allowing applicants to receive credit for the time they were legally in Canada before actually becoming status permanent residents.

Let us be clear about what this legislation would accomplish. This bill removes the unnecessary barriers to becoming full members of Canadian society. Our government has taken action by narrowing the age range of those required to meet language and knowledge requirements, so more newcomers have the chance of being granted Canadian citizenship.

Our government has demonstrated leadership by repealing the intent-to-reside provision of citizenship applications. I know there was a period of time during the previous Parliament when the government of the day conveniently forgot about a pesky little document called the charter. However, our government recognizes that all Canadians are free to move wherever they choose, and this right is guaranteed in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I want to talk about something I find to be deeply troubling. Let us imagine a country where people who were born and raised in this country could have their citizenship taken away. That country does exist, and its name is Canada.

Now this might come as a shock to my colleagues from across the aisle, but I agree with them. I will go slowly here so my colleagues can follow.

● (1310)

When terrorists commit a crime against our country, we should lock them up and let them pay for their crime, because when people commit a crime in this country, we lock them up, we prosecute them, and we sentence them to jail. This is the Canada my parents immigrated to, the place I am proud to call my home, and in this country we have a justice system designed to do exactly that: provide justice to Canadians.

I have had this debate with many during and after the election: citizenship is akin to adoption. When parents adopt a child, they take the child not knowing what he or she will become. Some may become doctors, lawyers, nurses, electricians, or maybe even members of Parliament, but some may also end up becoming

criminals. However, the adoptive parents cannot, all of a sudden, tell the biological parents from whom they adopted their children that the kid is now a criminal and they want to return the child, as he or she is not their child anymore. Their child is their child is their child.

The same goes for citizenship. When people come to Canada, we assess their medical histories, perform deep and extensive criminal histories and security assessments, including criminal record checks, histories, backgrounds, and we watch them for at least five years. For the first five years they live in Canada, we monitor them and are able to see their actions. Only after completing that long assessment and a written test, and in some cases an interview with a judge, do we decide that they are worthy of our citizenship. After that point, they are ours, period.

Subsequently, if people get radicalized or become terrorists or criminals of any kind in Canada, they are our problem, not the country from which they came. Why should another country take our criminals? Why? They become a problem in Canada, so why should the countries of their birth or their parents' birth take them back? Their act of terrorism or criminality happened or was conceived on Canada's soil, while being Canadian.

Therefore, we cannot just do a brain drain from countries by taking their best and brightest and then deport those who become rotten apples here in Canada. If this were the case, then we should deport the hundreds of mass murderers, serial rapists, pedophiles, and other criminals who are in Canada, in Canadian jails, back to the countries from which their parents came.

With that in mind, do we wish to have people of Canadian descent, who have migrated and become citizens elsewhere, such as the United States or European countries, be deported back here when they do heinous crimes in their new country of choice? No, they should pay for their crimes there.

Let us recap. Should Bill C-6 become law, it would give more flexibility for newcomers to Canada to apply, more newcomers would become full and permanent residents of this great country, and they would become citizens faster. Finally, it would remove and end a shameful second class of citizenship that should never exist in a country such as ours.

I hope my colleagues in the House will support our government's initiatives because our country is stronger not because we have no diversity but because of it.

● (1315)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his speech. It is always good to hear the personal stories of members who came to this country or whose parents or grandparents came to this country.

It is important to me that our country accept the principles of both diversity and shared values, and that if people step outside of those shared values to a certain extent, then they have chosen to step outside of the Canadian family. Obviously, the government takes a different approach. In fact, the Prime Minister was quoted in *The New York Times* saying, "There is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada".

Government Orders

I want to ask if the hon. member agrees with the Prime Minister who said, “There is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada”.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, in Canada we have a diverse range of cultures. We have indigenous culture, we have Quebec culture, we have a multicultural culture, so we are not a melting pot of culture, where everything merges into one. We celebrate a diverse range of cultures, and I am proud of living in Canada.

The member opposite from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan would know that his culture in Alberta is slightly different from those in British Columbia, Quebec, or the Maritimes, but it is the shared values of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, our Constitution, and our love for this great nation that forms our union. That is the culture we all celebrate.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

The NDP is obviously very pleased to be able to help fix mistakes made by the Conservatives with Bill C-24, which attacked fundamental rights and created two classes of Canadians.

I would like to ask my colleague a question about citizenship. Since February 2014, processing fees for citizenship applications increased from \$100 per person to \$530 per person, which can result in very significant costs. For example, a family that would like to apply for Canadian citizenship could well pay more than \$1,500.

I would like to know what the member thinks of this fee increase. Would he consider reducing the fees to what they were two years ago, that is, \$100 per person?

[*English*]

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this up and appreciating our new legislation that is being proposed.

I agree that we should relieve and reduce any barriers that are preventing citizenship, if we can.

I again thank the member and his colleague, the member for Vancouver East, who is on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, for raising this before. I hope we will be able to address the affordability of citizenship in due course.

Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first I would like to thank my friend, the member for Surrey Centre, for his excellent speech.

Bill C-6 is an extremely important bill to me, as a proud immigrant, a first-generation Canadian, and to my diverse riding of Brampton West. Family reunification is vital to my constituents.

As we know, this legislation would reduce the age to 18 to 54 for applicants for citizenship to demonstrate knowledge and language proficiency, which would help many senior immigrants in my riding of Brampton West.

I would like my colleague to tell the House why asking my constituent, who is 68 years of age and trying to reunite with his

family, to pass an English test is completely unfair and a huge barrier to becoming a Canadian citizen, and how this legislation would help constituents and help reunite families.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, this legislation would alleviate a lot of pressures. As members of Parliament, we know very well that, when we try to learn a second language—whether English is our first language and we are attempting to learn French, or vice versa, those who speak French in this House wanting to learn English—it is challenging at best, even for those who are within the ages of 18 to 55.

As we know, children and those who are younger have a much easier capacity through the due course of work, language training, and even interacting with their children, and they are able to learn and adapt to new languages much more easily than those who are over 55, especially those who are in their 60s or 65-plus ages. Those people have a difficult time adapting and sometimes learning languages. Even though they attempt and would like to speak the language, to get to the proficiency levels that our government requires for tests is a very difficult task, and we think this new bill will alleviate that stress on them.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who has spent a great deal of time on this debate already. I welcome his words as well.

I will start off with my 10 minutes to talk a little about my background. Hearing the remarks of the hon. member for Surrey Centre and the hon. member for Brampton West, with her intervention, they are seeming to make the bill about a general immigration bill, which is of course absolutely incorrect.

We will not take our lessons from the hon. members opposite when they get on their high horse and talk about their valid backgrounds. There is nothing wrong with that, but I was born elsewhere. My mother's mother was born in Aleppo, Syria. My father was born in Cyprus. I welcome the comments of the hon. members about their backgrounds and their histories, but on the Conservative side of the House, we have proud backgrounds and histories as well.

We have a different perspective on the bill. Just as we respect their perspective, they should respect our perspective. I do not want to hear the insinuation that somehow if members vote against this bill, they are anti-immigrant, or they do not believe that the future of our country will in great part be built on people who were born elsewhere. Those are the facts of the situation. That is my personal history. I take a bit of umbrage when I hear the other side try to corner the market on that point of view.

Therefore, I am speaking as a first generation Canadian. I am speaking about the importance of successfully integrating into Canadian society to take advantage of all that our great country has to offer. However, it does concern me that it appears that one of the first priorities of the Minister of Immigration and of the Liberal government is somehow to return the citizenship to convicted terrorists. There is no refuting the fact that the person who has the most to gain from the bill is the heinous ringleader of the Toronto 18, Zakaria Amara. Those are the facts.

Government Orders

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

We believe that there is only one class of Canadian citizens and that all citizens deserve to be protected from terrorist acts.

[*English*]

Therefore, it is particularly alarming to me that Bill C-6 would create an unacceptable and, frankly, ridiculous double standard. Under the proposed legislation, a convicted terrorist's citizenship rights are protected, whereas someone who commits fraud is eligible to have their citizenship revoked.

The fact remains that while the Liberals are focused on ensuring convicted terrorists can have their citizenship back, we Conservatives are instead choosing to focus on maintaining Canada's strong global reputation as one of the best places to live, a bastion of freedom with jobs, hope, and security.

Let me talk about section B of the bill. It would remove the requirement that if granted citizenship, an applicant would intend to continue to reside in Canada. I repeat this for the record. We believe new immigrants and new Canadians enrich our country. They make our Canadian experience more wholesome and more successful. The experiences and perspectives they can bring within our borders are integral to the Canadian experience.

We want newcomers, just as when I arrived on these shores as a four year old, not knowing anything about this country at that young age, relying on my parents' wisdom. Thank goodness they chose Canada as a place where they wanted to get ahead in their lives.

I know other members of our caucus and indeed of all caucuses may have shared experiences of the New World as a youngster, coming here not knowing anyone and many times not knowing the language. However, we want people to succeed. We want people to experience our freedoms, experience our safe communities across the country. It is not just about the freedom to succeed. In many cases newcomers are fleeing countries where they do not have the freedom to experience a safe community. That is, by and large, what Canada offers.

We want that safety as well as that freedom. That is the critical part about Bill C-6 that we find objectionable. Let me state for the record that this intention to reside provision does not restrict a citizen's mobility rights as guaranteed under the charter. Rather it reinforces the expectation that citizenship is a privilege given to those with the intention of making Canada their permanent home. That is the whole purpose of it.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

The Conservative Party would support an amendment that removes this provision from the bill.

[*English*]

Paragraph (c) of the bill would reduce the amount of time a person must have been physically present in Canada before applying for citizenship from four out of six years to three out of five.

Newcomers to Canada should receive every opportunity to succeed in every way possible. The longer an individual lives, works or studies in Canada, the greater the connection that person will have to our country.

On this side of the House, we believe that stronger residency requirements do promote integration, a greater attachment to Canada, and ultimately success in our great country. Make no mistake. Canadian citizenship is a very special thing, not easily emulated around the world. It bestows rights, freedoms, and protections to which many foreign nationals are not privy. As Canadians, they can vote and seek elected office. As such, we believe it is very important to be an active participant in Canadian life for a significant period of time prior to being granted citizenship in order to enrich both their personal experiences within Canada as well as our country's future. Therefore, we would support an amendment that would strike this component of the bill.

What it comes down to is a conception of an open, free, democratic, welcoming society, but one that enjoys the protections under the law, one that protects current citizens, permanent residents, and newcomers as well as bestowing those freedoms.

On this side of the House, we offer a balanced approach to these kinds of issues, balancing freedoms with responsibilities and protections. That is why we have the position we do on Bill C-6.

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with a number of the comments my colleague made, such as the value we all place on Canadian citizenship and the importance of immigration. I do not think anyone is here as part of this debate to lessen either one of those things. We are talking about a specific issue, and the member mentioned it himself, and that is terrorism.

Canadian citizenship comes with certain obligations. It does not come with conditions. One of those obligations is to conduct oneself in accordance with Canadian values. It also means conducting oneself according to the values of the rest of the world. One of Canada's values is to support its allies, friends, and colleagues. Exporting people who have been convicted of a crime as serious as terrorism and putting them in a place where they can offend again is not acting in accordance with Canadian values.

Would my friend across the floor agree with that?

Hon. Tony Clement: Madam Speaker, all of these would be done on a case-by-case basis. No one wants to increase the possibility of terrorism by a particular act. I am sure that would be challenged in our courts if it were to be the case.

In my time as president of Treasury Board, we dealt with many cases where citizenship was revoked. Typically the cases involved people lying on their application for citizenship, that lie being found out, and therefore their citizenship being revoked. Those were most of the cases with which I dealt.

If we can kick people out of our country for lying on their citizenship form, surely we can kick out dual nationals, those with another citizenship, who have committed a terrorist act in our country. That is our point of view.

Government Orders

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Liberals for introducing this bill, which corrects these bad Conservative policies and puts us back on the right track.

Furthermore, as we know, numerous experts testified that the previous bill completely violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that it was even unconstitutional. That was the opinion of the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, Amnesty International, the Canadian Council for Refugees, and the Barreau du Québec, to name a few.

Why, then, are the Conservatives so determined to defend the harmful aspects of this bill when they are likely to be inconsistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and unconstitutional?

Hon. Tony Clement: Madam Speaker, I am also a lawyer and I can say that it is important to have provisions to protect citizens in our charters of rights. That is also part of our bill. It is the responsibility of this Parliament to come up with a decision to better protect Canadians.

[*English*]

Our first priority is to protect our citizenry within the framework of reasonable laws, and this does answer that reasonable framework.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, this morning I talked about this being a policy choice, equating the moral blameworthiness of taking away citizenship for fraud, for immoral acts committed abroad, but now removing it for committing such acts at home for three narrow provisions.

Could the hon. member, as a lawyer talk, about this as a public policy choice? Treason was a ground for revocation under three Liberal prime ministers. That policy choice has not been explained. Could the member comment?

Hon. Tony Clement: Madam Speaker, the hon. member has alluded to this very well. This is a policy choice that is counter to other provisions that revoke citizenship or have done so historically, including for things that are similar to or even less important than this. Therefore, let us make sure the law is on all four squares and on the best ground. I think that is a better road to go.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I usually start by saying it is an honour to participate in this important debate. However, I have to say that this is a particularly important debate, one of the most important we have had thus far in the House, because we are talking about what Canadian citizenship means and the core aspects of Canadian identity.

I want to start by articulating what I see as three central principles of Canadian citizenship. I believe that Canadian citizenship should be accessible, should be valued, and should express collective values.

The first principle is that citizenship should be accessible. We take for granted that we are a country where citizenship is not only something people can be born into, but also that people can receive by coming here and becoming citizens. They can be from elsewhere

originally, but then buy into our collective values and become part of Canada. Our citizenship is accessible, which is part of our strength—being able to draw on the knowledge and experience that come from other parts of the world.

I was recently in the United Arab Emirates, and that is not the way things work there and in some other countries. People can live there for decades and never have an opportunity to acquire citizenship. Therefore, the way we do it in Canada is special, is important, and provides us with a unique value. I believe there is consensus on this principle of accessibility.

The second principle is that citizenship ought to be valued. It ought to be the sort of thing that we understand means something. To paraphrase Kant, it should never be treated as merely a means, but be valued as a good in and of itself.

For many of the new Canadians I have talked to in my riding and elsewhere, they have a particularly sharp sense of the value of Canadian citizenship. If it is something they did not start out with, if they had to come here and then acquire it, they have a particular appreciation for the value of that citizenship. New Canadians and all Canadians want us to ensure that citizenship is not just a tool to achieve some other end, but is regarded as a thing of value by those who hold it.

The third principle is that citizenship ought to express collective values in some sense. Of course, that does not mean that we have to agree on everything, or even on most things, but it does mean that there is some set of values that we can identify as being centrally Canadian.

Not everyone who breaks the law in any sense steps out of this essential values compact, but there are cases, and we have seen them, of people who clearly voluntarily make a very strong clean break with anything we would understand to resemble Canadian values.

I would argue that if we allow people who are involved in treason, terrorism, or fighting for foreign genocidal powers against Canada, people who clearly do not buy into any semblance of our collective values, to keep our citizenship, then we devalue that citizenship. All members here understand the importance of Canadian citizenship, but it ought to be valued as an end, not merely as a means, and it ought to express something about our collective values, not just express the fact that someone went through a particular process. That is what citizenship is about. That is what it should be about.

Here in Canada we have put these two critical ideas together. On the one hand, we have sought and effectively built a very diverse country ethnically, culturally, religiously, and linguistically. However, in the context of that, we have also sought generally to insist on the importance of common values, on the meaning of our citizenship, and on expressing some kind of collective values. At first blush, this might seem like a difficult combination, diversity on the one hand and common values on the other. Indeed, in most of the world's history, these things were not seen as going together. Most of the world's history has been populated either by small republics or big empires: on the one hand, possibly societies that are relatively small and homogenous and are held together by collective values, and, on the other hand, societies that are larger, more diverse, and controlled centrally.

Government Orders

However, the Canadian ideal was a unique political experiment in world history, and it is one that has worked. It was the idea that we could build a society that was both diverse but also expressed common values, and did so democratically.

We have all heard the expression, “having your cake and eating it too”. This was really our attempt to have our cake and eat it with ice cream and a glass of wine. We have done it and we have built a great society.

● (1340)

However, to have a cohesive democratic society that is diverse, we always need to have and maintain that idea of common values. There is a point at which someone goes too far and steps outside of those common values. This is what we are fighting for, and this is something that we on this side of the House believe is worth fighting for, the idea that citizenship must at some point entail common values. As we have seen, this is an idea contested by members opposite.

The Prime Minister recently told *The New York Times* that “There is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada.... Those qualities are what make us the first postnational state.” It is deeply troubling that the Prime Minister of Canada would spout, respectfully, such nonsense. This is a bastardization of a great Canadian political experiment, a troubling wrong turn in thinking, and it comes at a time when, frankly, Canada is at a high point in terms of its diversity and collective values. We have to maintain them. People come here because of our diversity, but not just because of our diversity, but also because they want to buy into a set of shared democratic values in that context. The vast majority of people who come here have no interest in our allowing terrorists to retain their citizenship.

I want to say as well that this bill is important to me personally. As the son and grandson of immigrants, I was always raised with this particular appreciation of the value of Canadian citizenship and the way it expresses our collective values. My grandmother grew up in a country that did not believe she had basic human dignity because of her race. My mother was born in Venezuela when her father was working on an energy project there. She is, in fact, a dual citizen. My father's parents arrived from Malta just a couple of months after he was born, and he liked to tell us that he had been made in Malta. Since my father is also an obstetrician, we were never in doubt about what that meant. It may be the case that I am the first Canadian MP of Maltese descent and this no doubt marks a major step forward in our social evolution. My wife's family members were immigrants to Canada from Pakistan, where they faced increasing persecution because of their Christian faith. Because of a history of ethnic and religious persecution, both of our families really understand what it means to be in a country like Canada, why our citizenship is valuable, and why we need to fight for those common values against the attempts of the current government to de-emphasize them and to allow convicted terrorists to remain citizens.

I want to conclude my speech today with a few points of refutation to what we have heard in the debate so far. I must say that we have heard some very good speeches from the government side, but we have heard many speeches that just simply repeated the same slogans over and over again about the importance of diversity, as if that were actually a subject for debate. Listening to this debate, I

have to say that there is no party with a monopoly on respect for diversity, but there does seem to be one party with a monopoly on sanctimony. Let us put the sanctimonious slogans aside and talk about the issues. Let us talk about the content of the bill, because it is simply too important to get lost in repeated sloganeering.

We have heard a lot of misinformation. We have heard members of the government say that new Canadians are worried that they might lose their citizenship just because they choose to reside outside the country. It is very clear that those people who are citizens are not required to live in Canada, but we do ask and should ask for an affirmation that people intend to reside in Canada. That does not preclude anyone who is a Canadian from living abroad at certain times, but it aligns us with a basic principle that if they just come here to get their citizenship and then plan on leaving right away, it does not really reflect an understanding of the value of Canadian citizenship.

We have heard this strange assertion that this violates the rule of law. Of course it does not. Citizenship is revocable in every country in the world. It would remain revocable in Canada after this bill passes, and these changes have not been required by the courts. Of course, the current elected government has a right to propose these measures, but to suggest that they are required by some principle of the rule of law reflects a misunderstanding of the way the law works. It is the invention of an artificial principle of law.

The Liberals have sought to skew the previous government's record, a record that includes the highest sustained immigration levels in the country's history. This is a critical discussion, so I ask the government members to put aside the slogans, put aside the talking points and misinformation, and let us have this discussion in a serious way. Canadian identity is too important.

● (1345)

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think my friend opposite has defeated his own argument, proving there is no monopoly on this side on sanctimonious speeches.

I want to thank him for relating his family history. I happen to know his aunt. She is a very good friend of mine and, much to his chagrin, a big supporter of mine. I send her regards.

We are talking about revocation of citizenship. We all agree on the importance of Canadian citizenship. We all agree on the importance of immigration. There is a difference in revoking someone's citizenship on the basis of fraud, because that means they were not entitled to it in the first place.

The hon. member is talking about giving someone Canadian citizenship and when that person is convicted of a crime, then sending him or her somewhere else so they can do it again. That does not represent Canadian values. Does the hon. member agree or disagree with this point?

● (1350)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I do appreciate the regards from my wife's aunt. My in-laws would tell voters during the election, “Don't worry, we checked him out much more than you ever will.”

Government Orders

When it comes to the issue of sending people to other countries, let us be very clear about the revocation of citizenship. There are many cases that could be involved here, or someone might already be in another country.

There was a case discussed yesterday of someone who set their passport on fire and then shot it. That person was already in a different country. That person should not have the benefits of Canadian citizenship. It should be understood that person like that has clearly established their separation from the principles Canada stands for, from Canadian values, and voluntarily stepped outside of the Canadian family.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, the bill before the House will create two-tier citizenship. The current law, law as amended by Bill C-24, levelled the playing field of citizenship. It meant that whether or not an individual was native born or an immigrant who became naturalized, both of those types of citizens could have their citizenship revoked if they had another nationality, or held dual citizenship, and had committed certain acts.

The bill will create two-tier citizenship because it will remove the right of the government to revoke citizenship for native-born Canadians, but keep it in place for those immigrants who come here and become naturalized Canadian citizens. That is two-tier citizenship.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize the great work of this member on this issue. He is absolutely right on this point.

In addition to the underlying philosophical problems with the approach the government has taken, it is clear that there are a lot of strange contradictions in the bill. The Liberals seem to say on the one hand that citizenship ought to be irrevocable, but the bill maintains the possibility of revoking citizenship. They talk about two-tier citizenship being a bad thing, but then, at the same time, the bill brings in a two-tier citizenship, because under the bill now there is no case in which someone born in Canada could ever lose their citizenship, but someone who moves to this country could.

The government members use slogans in this debate, but need to dig into and actually understand the content of the bill. I encourage all members of the government to do so. Do not just vote for the bill because the title sounds nice, but dig into it and understand its provisions and its implications. They should make their own decision on it.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just want to quickly refute a few of the arguments.

First, it is not two-tiered. For anyone who legitimately receives their citizenship, it cannot be revoked. The second point they made is that there will be still be revocation. There will not still be revocation for an individual who has legitimately achieved their citizenship.

On the common values, as the Conservatives have correctly pointed out, of all the terrorist and other acts they are talking about, most have been done by Canadian citizens. I cannot believe they want to revoke all of those citizenships. As for horrendous crimes, once again, they are saying it is two-tier if the crime is committed in Canada versus somewhere else. They are saying there is a difference

in that regard in the bill. There is not a difference. If you do those horrendous crimes in any country, including this one, before you gain your citizenship, you will not be allowed to become a citizen.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Could the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan please give a very brief answer?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it will be at least as brief as the question.

The member said, “Oh, no, in our bill, Canadian citizenship cannot be revoked—unless”. That is exactly the point. We do not believe Canadian citizenship can be revoked unless there is fraud or terrorism involved.

They changed one of the unlesses, but there is still an unless. That is the point. They still do not believe citizenship should be irrevocable; they believe it should be revocable, as it is in every country in the world and as it always has been here.

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

Unfortunately, the member will not have a lot of time to get into his speech, but he will have a few minutes to begin it and he can continue it after question period.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will begin by noting that I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act.

During the time leading up to the election on October 19, 2015, I heard many concerns from residents of Cloverdale—Langley City about the changes that the previous government had made to the Citizenship Act, and since this government was elected on October 19, with part of our election platform being to make changes to the Citizenship Act, I have heard from many constituents inquiring as to when these changes will occur.

The bill represents an important reminder of this government's commitment to a diverse and inclusive Canada. It recognizes the contribution that new Canadians make to this great country each and every day.

The proposed changes in Bill C-6 would provide greater flexibility for applicants trying to meet the requirements for citizenship. It would help immigrants obtain citizenship faster and it would repeal provisions of the Citizenship Act that allow citizenship to be revoked from citizens who engage in certain acts against the national interest.

I can tell members that citizenship is an issue of critical importance to my constituents in Cloverdale—Langley City, many of whom are immigrants who have achieved citizenship and are exceedingly proud of their status as Canadians. They are proud of what being a Canadian means for them and their families.

Statements by Members

I have heard from recent immigrants about their fears of losing their Canadian citizenship. They saw how the rules of citizenship could be changed by a stroke of the government's pen. Members of diverse communities were horrified, even terrified, that they would be targeted for deportation by their own government.

In May 2015, under the previous government's Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act, legislative changes were created to allow citizenship to be revoked from dual citizens. The legislative changes allowed citizenship to be taken away for certain acts against the national interest of Canada. Convictions for terrorism, high treason, treason, spying offences, or membership in an organized group engaged in armed conflict with Canada were grounds for revocation. Citizens felt threatened and under attack by these changes.

I also heard from Canadians who have been Canadians for decades but who still hold citizenship from other countries and had passed this dual citizenship on to their children. They too are horrified, even terrified, that not only they but their children could be targeted for deportation by their own government under the rules set by the previous Conservative government.

Bill C-6 would repeal these grounds for deportation. This government believes that the Canadian justice system is fully capable of administering justice, protecting the public interest, and holding individuals accountable for their actions.

However, the value, the strength, and the iconic symbolism of Canadian citizenship would remain intact under Bill C-6. The bill would continue to provide the ability to revoke citizenship when it was wrongfully obtained. False representation, fraud, or knowingly concealing material circumstances remain grounds for revocation.

Madam Speaker, I will continue my speech after question period and will share my time, as I have mentioned.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

HERITAGE DAY IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador was honoured this past Heritage Day when the minister responsible for Parks Canada announced a number of historical honours bestowed on sites and people from our province.

On this, the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel, I draw the attention of the House to Thomas Nangle. "Padre", as he was affectionately known, was Roman Catholic chaplain to the beloved Royal Newfoundland Regiment. He enlisted following the tragic losses of Beaumont-Hamel and succeeded in having Newfoundland's efforts in World War I commemorated both in Europe, with the Trail of Caribou, and in St. John's, with the National War Memorial.

On behalf of St. John's East, I thank Parks Canada for its work and encourage everyone to learn more about the sites, events, and people of national historical significance at the Parks Canada website, including our dear padre, Thomas Nangle.

● (1400)

SASKATOON VOLUNTEER

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize one of my constituents. Born in Prud'homme, Saskatchewan, Denise Hounjet-Roth has brought zeal to everything she has touched in life.

As a teacher in the Saskatoon Separate School Division, she brought passion to her mission of teaching students. It was, however, during her time at university that she first became known for her passion for defending human life.

Denise is known for volunteering countless hours working with Campaign Life Coalition and the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, praying in front of hospitals and organizing demonstrations to support the sanctity of life from conception to natural death. This passion has also led her to an active role in politics, first with the Liberals for Life campaign and then later with the Conservative campaigns in Saskatoon.

Denise was married to Louis Roth in 1982 and is mum to Gregory and Jonathan, mum-in-law to Elizabeth, and grandma to four-month-old Olivia. Family is central to her life.

Denise, by God's grace, we pray that everything goes well with your current battle. We will see you again this year, curling, politicking, protesting, and praying in the way that only you can.

* * *

MAKE A DIFFERENCE CAMPAIGN

Mr. Don Rusnak (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I was fortunate enough to visit St. Elizabeth elementary school in Thunder Bay, which is the same school I attended growing up. There I met Mr. Cameron's grade 5 and 6 class and learned about the Make a Difference campaign, otherwise known as MAD, which encourages individuals of all ages to give back to their communities.

The students have been making a difference in the city of Thunder Bay through acts of kindness, such as shovelling driveways and volunteering at our local homeless shelter.

Today, in honour of the dedication shown by Mr. Cameron's class, I pledge to join MAD by consciously choosing to perform acts of kindness in my community.

I invite the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent and all my peers in the House of Commons to join us as we set out to prove that a kind gesture, great or small, can make a world of difference.

*Statements by Members***INFRASTRUCTURE**

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinipi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month I was visited by a delegation from the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. I thank those representatives for taking the time to visit me. Their issues were very familiar to me as a northern resident.

To participate in Canada's economy, rural and remote northern communities require access to diverse markets, access to services, access to training and educational programs, and access to the Internet and cellphone services.

We in the north learned to adjust to life without services and employment. However, northern and remote communities are integral to Canada's economic prosperity.

In the spirit of ensuring fair and equitable distribution of wealth, I am committed to working hard to help our rural and northern communities to reach their potential. This means pushing the government to increase infrastructure spending and create jobs. After years of Conservative cuts, it is time for the government to invest in our northern communities.

* * *

[Translation]

PIERRE BERGERON

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during a ceremony on February 12 at Rideau Hall, Gatineau resident Pierre Bergeron was awarded the Order of Canada, Canada's highest civilian honour, for his contributions as a champion of Canada's francophonie.

This past Saturday, Mr. Bergeron also received the Prix Richelieu Fondateur Albert-Boyer, which is awarded annually to people who have made outstanding contributions to the francophonie.

Originally from Saguenay, Mr. Bergeron began working for *Le Droit* in 1975. Throughout his career, as he himself has said, he chose to provoke without harming, inform without distorting, and raise people's awareness without dulling their sensitivity.

By choosing to take sides instead of remaining impartial as the publisher of *Le Droit*, Mr. Bergeron played a major role in saving the Montfort Hospital and helped francophones on both sides of the Ottawa River flourish.

Mr. Bergeron also contributed to his region as a member of many boards, including the United Way's, and was also involved in the Michener Awards Foundation.

It is a privilege for me—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

* * *

[English]

CALEDON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Caledon Chamber of Commerce on its 30th anniversary.

This chamber has been the voice of good business in Caledon by consistently providing excellent programs and services to its members since 1986, as well as always being a strong advocate on behalf of the business community to all levels of government.

The chamber has also been an engaged and active member of the larger Caledon community. It has done this through events such as the annual Caledon Home and Lifestyle Show, which showcases many outstanding local businesses while providing residents with the opportunity to discover and support these local businesses, which benefits our community immensely.

On behalf of the residents of Dufferin—Caledon, I would like to sincerely thank the Caledon Chamber of Commerce for its countless contributions to our community and wish it another 30 years of business.

* * *

● (1405)

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 5, 2016, I hosted an International Women's Day town hall at the Donway Baptist Church in my riding of Don Valley East.

The event was well received and was attended by a great number of women and men. The participants were pleased to learn about our Liberal government's initiatives in the areas of economic equity and gender parity.

I would like to thank Rev. Darrell Maguire for reminding us that it is women, our mothers, who nurture society. His example of his mother and the influence she had on his life was uplifting.

It is important to recognize the achievements of women and know that there is still so much to be done to promote gender equity in Canada and across the world. On my behalf and on behalf of all those who participated in the event, I would like to thank Rev. Maguire and his team for their wonderful hospitality.

I look forward to working with all members of this House as we move towards greater empowerment of women and girls here in Canada.

* * *

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S CARING CANADIAN AWARD

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize and congratulate a young student from the Nickel Belt riding.

Sophie Ménard is a grade 10 student at École secondaire Hanmer. On February 23, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnson, Governor General of Canada, presented Miss Ménard with a prestigious honour, the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award, for her many hours of charity efforts within her school and the community.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]*

Sophie Ménard has been one of the OUICare charitable club's pioneers since its inception and works tirelessly to help the youth group thrive. Sophie played an active role in the We Stand in Silence campaign, Coldest Night of the Year, WE Day, and many local and international fundraisers. She has also worked with Free the Children, Maison Vale Hospice, and the Samaritan Centre.

[English]

I am very proud of Miss Ménard and all young Canadians who are dedicated to helping others. Their commitment and enthusiasm are truly inspirational.

* * *

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of this House to an explosion and fire at one of my region's largest employers, the Quesnel West Fraser mill in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George.

Thankfully no one was injured in last night's explosion, but the unfortunate truth is that we are no strangers to loss of life in the Cariboo region. In 2012, in my riding and that of my colleague, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, we experienced and mourned the loss of four lives on two separate occasions due to mill explosions in Burns Lake and Prince George. Numerous others suffered from injury and continue today to deal with the healing process, both emotionally and physically.

It was these very communities that banded together in a time of terrible tragedy that exemplified the pioneer spirit that has come to define our character in the north.

To my friends and family back home in Quesnel, my thoughts and prayers are with them today. I ask that all members in this House take a moment to remember those who have lost their lives in a workplace incident and the families that continue to carry forward their memory.

* * *

ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to give a big shout-out to Team NWT athletes, coaches, and mission staff who have been in Nuuk, Greenland, since March 6 participating in the 24th Arctic Winter Games.

What started out in Yellowknife in 1970 with competitors from Yukon, Alaska, and the NWT has turned into the largest multi-sport and cultural event for youth athletes from many of the world's arctic regions. There are now over 2,000 participating athletes from Nunavut, northern Alberta, Nunavik, Russia, Greenland, and Scandinavia.

These athletes are competing in 15 different sports, from cross-country skiing and hockey to traditional Dene and Inuit games. Attending the games is a great achievement for all these youth. It will show them that hard work and perseverance pays off. These young athletes have developed skills and will gain experience that will serve them well in life.

To all the Arctic Winter Games athletes, good luck and have fun.

* * *

TIBET

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 57th anniversary of the Tibetan national uprising. On March 10, 1959, thousands gathered in front of the Potala Palace, in Lhasa, to rise up against injustice in Tibet. That year, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, an honorary citizen of this country, and 100,000 other Tibetans, became refugees.

His Holiness and thousands of other Tibetans are now seeking a path of return. They are pursuing an approach called “the middle way”. The middle way seeks nothing more than greater autonomy for Tibet within China. It is an approach that would peacefully resolve the issue of Tibet and bring about stability and co-existence between the Tibetan and Chinese people based on the concept of equality and mutual co-operation.

It saddens me greatly that in a desperate attempt to raise more awareness about the cause of Tibet, 151 persons have self-immolated. Those deaths should never have been necessary.

On the 57th anniversary of the 1959 uprising, it is up to all of us to focus on raising awareness about the Tibetan cause.

* * *

● (1410)

ANTONI JEDLINSKI

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, February 16, the community of Chatham-Kent—Leamington lost a great citizen, Antoni “Tony” Jedlinski. Tony was born in Augustow, Poland in 1940. He was the beloved husband of Carolyn, and loving father of Katie, Lisa, and Monica.

He was an active member of Our Lady of Victory Church and the Polish community. He served as president of the Chatham Polish Canadian Club for over 30 years. He was a dentist, and owned and operated Chatham Denture clinic.

I met Tony 45 years ago. As a new Canadian, he would gas up at my father's Shell station and teach me my first Polish words.

I saw Tony most recently at the 75th anniversary celebration of the Polish Canadian Club. Tony worked tirelessly to preserve the language, culture, and traditions of the Polish Community. In fact, the club traces its roots to an original group of pioneers who settled in Chatham in 1940.

I take this opportunity to give my deepest sympathies to his loving family and friends. He will be truly missed.

* * *

DONALD MONROE BLACKMERE

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the life of Donald Monroe Blackmere, a veteran in my riding, who recently passed away at the age of 95.

Don served with the Royal Canadian Army during World War II, from 1940 to 1945, and was a member of the Streetsville Royal Canadian Legion Branch 139.

In 2015, Don was appointed a Knight of the National Order of the Legion of Honour by the request of the French government, for his service to the liberation of France. His bravery and service to our country will not be forgotten.

I ask that all members of the House join me in honouring the courageous life of Donald Blackmere.

* * *

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S CARING CANADIAN AWARD

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the work of 14 of my constituents who have recently been honoured by the Governor General with the Caring Canadian Award, including Robert Lenard Cutler, Dollie Kaetler, Donna Kutzner, Eric Kutzner, Heather More, Tanna Patterson, Gertie Brown, Julie Ewashen, Thelma Johnson, Christine Munkerud, Terje Munkerud, Nicole Nilsson, Jean Syroteuk, and Merve Syroteuk.

From providing medical care in Haiti, to protecting wildlife, to supporting people living with disabilities, these caring Canadians have dedicated their lives to making the world a better place.

I also want to honour two more of my constituents who will receive Medals of Bravery for their rescue efforts: Constable Kevin Johnson and Michael Robert Henderson.

Sincere thanks to all of them for their important contributions to Kootenay—Columbia and to Canada.

* * *

KRAFT HOCKEYVILLE 2016

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Brockville, Ontario, in my riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, is on the top 10 list for Kraft Hockeyville.

I congratulate everyone involved and encourage all residents of the riding, and anyone else who wishes to help support Brockville's efforts, to vote. The first round of voting begins this Sunday and closes on Monday. The second round of voting is the following weekend on Sunday and Monday. Go to www.khv2016.ca to vote, and remember to vote early and vote often.

I was pleased to be able to support the community's efforts recently when I participated in the Brockville winter classic weekend and the Montreal Canadiens NHL alumni hockey game that raised more than \$40,000 to help put a roof on the outdoor arena. The winner of the Hockeyville contest will receive \$100,000 toward arena upgrades.

Vote Brockville.

Oral Questions

● (1415)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL RARE DISEASE DAY

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am making this statement on behalf of the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

Patients with rare diseases are on Parliament Hill today with their families and the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders in connection with International Rare Disease Day, which was on February 29. I would like to commend the organization on its tireless efforts to raise awareness across the country.

Three million Canadians are affected by a rare disease, and two-thirds of those people are children. Often these diseases can be fatal or severely debilitating. Our dear colleague, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, knows first-hand the considerable obstacles that come with living with such a condition. In Canada, rare diseases are a major public health problem, one that often has no solution.

I want to thank my colleagues in House who are wearing a yellow scarf today to acknowledge the efforts of those who are battling rare diseases, and I commend the courage and determination of the patients and their families. Now we must do everything we can to make their situation better.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Obama administration has rejected Canadian pipelines, it has lifted the export ban on its own U.S. oil and approved a massive expansion of U.S. pipelines. The U.S. is not only our biggest energy customer, it is now our biggest competitor.

For any climate change agreement to work, the playing field must be level. Can the Prime Minister guarantee Canadian energy workers that he will not put them behind the eight ball by implementing new measures here at home that the U.S. has no intention of implementing itself?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said many times, including in the House, that moving Canadian resources to market is a priority for him personally, and for the Government of Canada. The best chance for that to happen is to have a credible regulatory process. That, unfortunately, was not the case with the previous government, but is now in place to give us a result that we all want.

*Oral Questions***THE ECONOMY**

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how important is energy to the government when the energy minister is not even invited to go to Washington? I even got invited to go to Washington.

On another issue, the Liberals have committed to borrowing billions of dollars every year, but economists tell us this explosive borrowing will not create the jobs that we need. In fact, they say this spending will have virtually no positive impact on growth. Why are they so determined to saddle Canadians with so much debt for so little result?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are determined to make investments that can improve the lives of middle-class Canadians and people across the country. We have made it very clear that we believe the time is right for us to make significant investments to improve the long-term productivity of this country, at a time when interest rates are the lowest they have ever been. It is the right thing to do for the country. It is the right thing to do for the middle class and all those struggling to join the middle class.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals were left a \$3.2-billion surplus that they squandered in a matter of days. We had the best record on job creation in the G7, but this government has no plan to maintain that momentum.

Will the Liberals admit that they have no plan?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are starting off with a deficit, the one that the Conservatives left behind. They also left us with billions of dollars of debt. Now, we have a plan to grow our economy and help Canadians across the country by increasing the level of growth for the future.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Montreal Economic Institute had this to say this morning: “The Federal Government’s Deficits Will Not Stimulate the Canadian Economy”.

After inheriting an operating surplus for this year, the Liberal government is now predicting an \$18.4-billion deficit. I know that the Liberals do not like numbers, but those are the facts. The Minister of Finance seems to have lost control over his finances.

How big will the deficit be?

● (1420)

[*English*]

Give us a number, please.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. We started out with a deficit. We are further in debt because of the Conservatives. Fortunately, we have a plan to help Canadians across the country by increasing the growth rate. In the future, Canadians across the country will benefit from a more robust economy.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is not in a recession. This is no time to borrow money that will have to be repaid indefinitely by our children and grandchildren.

I would like to once again quote the Montreal Economic Institute, which said, “The best way to stimulate growth is to remove obstacles for entrepreneurs and innovators by reducing taxes and the regulatory burden.”

Of course, we on this side of the House agree with that.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us what taxes he will raise in order to be able to balance the budget?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our plan is to make investments in infrastructure and innovation in Canada. By so doing, we will be able to increase our growth rate for the future. That is our plan, and it is the opposite of what the other parties proposed during the election campaign. They wanted to make cuts and make things even more difficult for Canadians.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister and his quasi-royal band of advisors, ministers, and members of Parliament are in Washington, we hope that in between their lavish meals, they will be able to resolve the softwood lumber issue. The forestry industry employs more than 300,000 workers in Quebec. The sector has been struggling for years and is now gripped by uncertainty again with the end of the agreement.

Will the Prime Minister come back from Washington with an agreement that will protect our industry and our workers?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, because I have some good news to share.

I am pleased to announce that the Prime Minister and President Obama have indicated their interest in a long-term softwood lumber agreement. They also agreed that their ministers would examine in an intensive fashion—

The Speaker: The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know this is a new government, but interest in having an agreement is not an agreement. Are those members serious? Are they kidding us? We have interest in an agreement, and that is all they have to announce.

We are glad that the Prime Minister is having a good time down in Washington, but there are things that he should be fighting for, and one of them is Canadian jobs. The reality is that, if a new agreement is not made, there are jobs that will—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to finish the announcement, which is that the Prime Minister and President Obama have instructed their ministers to examine in an intensive fashion all the options—

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Hear! Hear!

The Speaker: Order. It must be all the bright colours around here or something. Let us listen to the hon. parliamentary secretary. A little order, please.

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I understand the enthusiasm on the part of members on the other side, Mr. Speaker.

They will table a report within 100 days, which will outline the principal manner in which we will resolve this issue.

* * *

• (1425)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today's report from the correctional investigator highlights some troubling issues, in particular, the shocking rise in the number of indigenous people in prison. Over the past 10 years, the number of indigenous inmates has skyrocketed by more than 50%. This is another legacy of the federal government's systematic underfunding, from education to social services, to housing, to economic development.

What is the government's plan to finally turn around decades of neglect for Canada's first peoples?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

We welcome the recommendations in the correctional investigator's report. We are well aware of this issue and we are working together to develop best practices, which shows that we are collaborating and working hard to make improvements for first nations peoples.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the correctional investigator released an alarming report today that reveals that the indigenous inmate population grew by 50%. Furthermore, 37% of all women serving a sentence of over two years are indigenous women. The correctional system has a duty to take the indigenous reality into account, but it is failing in that duty.

Can the Minister of Public Safety please tell us exactly what he plans to do to correct this situation and fulfill that duty? Does he have a plan? When is he going to share his plan with us?

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I will add to my colleague's concern and say that we are also aware of not only the growth of the indigenous inmate population, but also the growth of the population of older people in certain regions of Canada and the population of younger people in other regions of Canada. This is evidence to indicate that accepting the correctional investigator's recommendations is the first step in coming up with solutions.

[*English*]

FINANCE

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are spending as if we were in the great recession, even though we are not. The economy is growing. They could provide targeted supports to parts of the economy that need help today and invest in infrastructure over the long term, but they are not going to do that. They are obliterating every one of their promises by running a \$30 billion deficit. They just cannot resist spending more. How can the Liberals justify spending money they do not have to fight a recession we are not in?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very much looking forward to presenting to this House our budget 2016 in just a few short days. I am pleased to say for the hon. member and all the members of this House that we will be introducing a budget that will make investments in long-term productivity, investments in infrastructure that can make a real difference in Canadians' lives, while increasing our growth rate in this country for those people who need to have a much better growth rate now and in the future for their families.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, TD Bank officials said the Liberals are breaking every single fiscal promise they made during the campaign, and Bank of Montreal officials warned that their spending spree will not come close to producing the growth the Liberals are imagining.

Can the Minister of Finance confirm that his fiscal plan is to blow the bank, blow through all of his fiscal promises, and then cross his fingers that the budget will somehow balance itself?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm for this House that we have had a last decade of low growth. We campaigned on a promise for Canadians that we would help those Canadians who are middle class and those struggling to join the middle class, by investing in growth. We will be making investments in infrastructure at a time when interest rates are at a historically low level. We are going to do this because it is the right thing for all those Canadians, who know we need to make investments in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier the Minister of Finance said, "here are the facts". We are the ones who have the real facts.

According to the "Fiscal Monitor" published by the Department of Finance, from April to November 2015, there was a \$1-billion budgetary surplus. That fact is straight from the Department of Finance.

What is this government's plan for the coming years? Is it to rack up a \$150-billion deficit?

Does the government realize that putting our children in debt does not create wealth? Helping small businesses is what really creates wealth and what really creates jobs.

• (1430)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only people who think the Conservatives had a surplus are the Conservatives themselves.

Oral Questions

A month, two months, six months, that is not a year. For 2015-16, we will have a deficit. That was our plan from the start. We will invest to grow the economy. That way, we will be better off in the future.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only person in the Department of Finance who thinks that there was no surplus is the Minister of Finance himself, not the Conservatives. How can such an honourable man say such things? It makes no sense.

Today, the Montreal Economic Institute set the government straight. Going into debt does not build wealth. What builds wealth is supporting job creators, our SMEs, those who truly create wealth in Canada.

What is the plan to create jobs in Canada? What is the plan to help those who create wealth?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, we have a plan to grow the economy. We started with tax cuts for the middle class, which will help nine million Canadians across the country keep more money in their pockets this year. We will add to that other measures included in the budget. Two weeks from now, things will be looking decidedly up.

* * *

[English]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been evasive for months when asked about Bombardier's billion-dollar deal. Finally, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development stood up yesterday to say that the government has a plan for Bombardier. The last time the Liberals had a plan, they blocked the Toronto island airport expansion and killed the Porter deal with Bombardier, which would have created thousands of jobs.

The Liberals are cooking up a backroom deal with Bombardier. How much would this secret deal cost Canadians?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes that Bombardier is part of a key industry and sector in our country, the aerospace industry, which employs more than 180,000 Canadians in high-quality jobs and represents more than \$29 billion in economic activity. We are in discussions with Bombardier, and we are in discussions with the Government of Quebec. If there is a solid business case to be made, we will certainly present it to the people.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want a market-based solution to support Bombardier that does not cost them billions of dollars of their hard-earned income.

Yesterday in question period the industry minister said that the government has a plan for Bombardier. After question period, in committee the transport minister said that no decision has been made. Who is telling the truth?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister made it clear in the House that, on December

11, Bombardier approached the Government of Canada to ask us to help it out. We are studying its case as it knows this is a very complex file. We are doing our due diligence because there is one thing that we promised the people of Canada, which is whatever decision we make will be based on a solid business case and a solid analysis. That is something we believe in, that it is evidence based as opposed to just making decisions willy-nilly, as they do on the other side.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the Prime Minister announced an agreement with the Americans to reduce methane emissions. We are pleased that the United States is finally recognizing the need to act, but this is nothing new for Canada. The provinces already made a commitment in this regard.

It is time to take the fight against climate change seriously.

Will the government stop doing just the bare minimum and finally present clear targets for reducing CO₂ emissions?

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to methane emissions, to achieve real progress we have decided to take joint action with the United States to reduce methane emissions across the industry. The former Conservative government talked about this for years. We are getting it done.

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas emission with a global warming potential 25 times that of carbon dioxide. Both countries have committed to reduce methane emissions by 40% to 45% by 2025 and will thereby be taking significant action on climate change.

●(1435)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, obviously tackling methane emissions is important, but many provinces, like British Columbia and Alberta, already have plans in place. The real elephant in the room is the urgent crisis of rising CO₂ emissions.

Another Canadian prime minister meets with another American president, and we are left with no price on carbon, no targets to reduce greenhouse gases, and no plan to actually get us there.

Photo ops and state dinners are swell, but when are we going to actually see a plan from the current government that will reduce climate change in this country?

Oral Questions

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to quote some of the words of President Obama from this morning. He stated, "I'm especially pleased to say the United States and Canada are fully united in combatting climate change".

This government, in the short five months that it has been in power, has been part of creating a historic global deal on climate change, has started down the path of developing a pan-Canadian framework with the provinces and territories to address climate change, and today announced concrete continental measures to address it. This is real progress and this is real change.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the gallery there were ranchers from my riding, who live in the area where aboriginal title has been declared over private property. Frankly, when they heard the responses from the ministers, they were terrified about their lack of regard for their ranches and their property.

Can the justice minister stand in her place and reassure them that they will protect private property rights?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the justice minister clearly stated yesterday, this matter is before the courts. We cannot, therefore, talk about the specific case.

What we can say is that the minister is working collaboratively with the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs on the issue of negotiating and settling the land question in B.C. Our government's approach will reflect our commitment to the goal of reconciliation and to our renewed nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous groups, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recognition of rights is incredibly important, but so is recognition of private property in those areas.

If this case is successful, it would include private lands within the city of Kamloops, as well as other municipalities, Sun Peaks Resort, and the university. This is huge. The premier of the province is very concerned. The Liberals need to step up to the table and be part of that suit.

Again, I will ask, and do not talk about the court case, will he just stand and say that he cares about private property rights and that he will protect them?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue of private property rights and the issue of aboriginal rights are before the courts, and it would be highly inappropriate for us to talk about this court case and about the matters that are an issue in the court case in this chamber.

We, as a government, will continue to deal with first nation land claims in a manner that is consistent with our commitment to reconciliation and a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with

indigenous groups based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada has abandoned private property owners in British Columbia.

There is a court case in B.C. that, if successful, will place aboriginal title over privately-held lands for the first time in Canadian history. The premier of British Columbia is not hiding behind the courts. She has joined with us and has taken a stand to protect private property.

Will any one of the 17 Liberal MPs from B.C. stand up for British Columbia, or do they believe Ottawa knows best when it comes to private property rights?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this case will not be litigated in this chamber. It will be litigated before the courts in British Columbia.

It is early in the litigation process. There will be things that will happen in the litigation process and outside of the litigation process, but what will not happen is that it be litigated here.

All matters pertaining to aboriginal land claims will be dealt with in an atmosphere of respect and a renewed nation-to-nation relationship.

● (1440)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, and private land owners are part of this nation too.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. Members seem to be very anxious to applaud the member for Chilliwack—Hope, but let us let him finish his question first.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, private land owners are part of this nation too, and it is time that the government recognizes that their rights are currently being threatened and should be protected.

Christy Clark has made it crystal clear that respecting aboriginal rights does not mean abandoning private property rights.

When will the government stand shoulder to shoulder with B.C. and fight to protect private property rights?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this fight is before the courts and the competing interests will advance their cases before the courts. Matters that are before the courts will not be played out in this chamber. All of the private interests will have an opportunity to advance their case. This is not the forum for that.

With respect to aboriginal land claims, this government is committed to a renewed relationship, a relationship that has been broken, a relationship that will continue in the future on a nation-to-nation basis.

*Oral Questions***CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are shocked by the KPMG tax cheats scandal, and they are outraged by the government's lack of action. These people were caught hiding millions from the taxman, and they do not even get a slap on the wrist.

While the CRA harasses charitable organizations and regular Canadians who just make a mistake on their tax forms, these millionaires get a sweetheart deal. It is not fair and it is not right.

Who is being held accountable for this?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CRA is actively pursuing its work on this matter, which is still under investigation and has not yet been resolved. I would like to be clear: there is no amnesty and there is only one set of rules.

What is the reality? The CRA exposed the scheme and has been conducting taxpayer audits. The CRA has taken legal action.

I would therefore like to reassure the House that all Canadian taxpayers are treated equally regardless of their income.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the CRA made secret deals with millionaires so that they would not have to pay penalties and would not be taken to court. That is what the CRA did.

The generalities and rhetoric we are getting from the minister do not change anything. Something needs to be done and it is her job to make that happen. That is what she should be doing today.

People are outraged about the KPMG affair. The law should be the same for everyone. It is unacceptable that rich people, such as the KPMG millionaires, are being let off the hook so easily. The government says that it cares about the middle class. Well, now is the time to show it.

Can the minister tell us what she intends to do to ensure that the companies and individuals involved get what they deserve—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of National Revenue.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CRA is taking action in every possible case where tax rules were broken, regardless of the income of the people involved.

Last year, the CRA was able to recover \$11.5 billion. Our government is committed to protecting the integrity of the Canadian tax system. We will fight aggressively against tax evasion and tax avoidance.

That is what I am working on today, and that is what was stipulated in my mandate letter.

[*English*]

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Coast Guard patrols and protects our oceans and waterways, keeping mariners safe. In fact, on an average day it saves 15 lives. Coast Guard officers need the best tools in order to do their jobs, working in often dangerous conditions.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard please tell me what the Government of Canada is doing to improve its monitoring and patrol capabilities, particularly as it applies to the use of helicopters?

• (1445)

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his diligence on this file.

[*Translation*]

The Coast Guard is proud of the delivery of one of the 15 new light transport helicopters for the Shearwater base in Nova Scotia.

The minister recently spoke to the chief pilot, who confirmed that these made-in-Canada helicopters were small marvels. They are safer, faster, and more effective than the ones they are replacing. What is more, they will be delivered within budget and earlier than planned.

Our government is providing the men and women of the Canadian Coast Guard with the modern equipment they need to help the Canadian public.

* * *

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada if she would do what it took to prevent convicted criminals from getting two-for-one or even three-for-one credit for time served off their sentences. I am disappointed that she did not mention the rights of victims, and her answer dealt solely with the rights of the accused, which makes no sense because this issue involves convicted criminals.

I will give her another chance. Does she believe convicted criminals should receive this kind of a break?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, there has been some concern expressed by judges in courts in this land with respect to the pre-sentence custody credit arrangements. Those cases are being reviewed. There are others pending that are being reviewed.

In fact, there is a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system that is under way in the department that will include these ongoing challenges and the modernization of the code, which has not happened since 1980.

Oral Questions

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada has a duty to stand up and defend the laws of the land. In at least five cases Ontario judges have given extra credits to convicted criminals, in direct contravention of the proof in sentencing act.

When will the minister finally stand up for victims by standing up for the proof in sentencing act, instead of just standing up for convicted criminals?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are well aware of the challenges that have been launched in the Ontario courts and the judgments that have been rendered.

Those judgments, as well as other cases that are pending with respect to challenges to the pre-custody credit regime in our country, are being reviewed as part of a larger review to determine the efficiency and the effectiveness of sentencing and other criminal justice matters.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the 2016 Liberal immigration scheme cuts 8,000 caregivers from coming to Canada and taking care of those in need. Canadians all over the country have benefited from this program over the past 10 years. Now they will have to suffer because of this reckless Liberal cut.

Could the minister explain to Canadians why the Liberals think axing 8,000 caregivers is a good idea?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the fact that Canada, in 2016, will admit the highest number of permanent residents in living history, with a focus on keeping families together, helping those in difficulty, and at the same time maintaining our economic immigration going forward.

We will allow more caregivers, the highest number in the last two years. Waiting times for caregivers will be coming down.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives oversaw the highest sustained targets of economic immigration in our history. Under the 2016 Liberal immigration scheme tabled on Tuesday, 25,000 economic immigrant spots will be cut. Could the minister explain why the Liberals intend to keep so many economic immigrants from coming to Canada and growing our economy?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true, the Conservatives achieved something that was the highest in Canadian history in immigration: the highest processing times we have seen for 10 long years.

My number one objective is not only to sustain and grow immigrants in every component, but to do everything possible to bring those Conservative processing times down.

•(1450)

THE SENATE

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at committee, the President of the Treasury Board admitted that the new advisory board for Senate appointments would cost \$1 million every year and that its recommendations would be secret. That is on top of the \$90 million currently spent on the Senate.

It remains unelected, unaccountable, and under investigation. Why is the government pouring more money into this scandal-plagued institution rather than following the example of every provincial legislature and abolishing the upper house?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night I met with the committee as part of discussing supplementary estimates (C). In fact, part of that did involve an investment in good government in an appointment process that will ensure that Canadians of the highest merit are named to the Senate of Canada. This does require some level of investment, but \$1 million invested in good government is significantly less than Senator Duffy's expenses, if I recall correctly.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, diafiltered milk has been coming into Canada from the United States since 2013, and as a result, Canadian producers have lost millions of dollars. That is completely unacceptable. The Liberals committed to taking action, and the minister has acknowledged the problem many times. We are well aware that the Americans are not going to be happy with these changes.

Now is the time to take action and fix this problem. When will the minister enforce the rules and fix the problems?

[*English*]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are fully aware of the milk problem. I am in full discussions with the dairy industry and will continue to be in discussions with the dairy industry.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day that goes by under the Liberals, the Canadian oil industry becomes less competitive. The Prime Minister is doing everything in his power to hurt the Canadian oil sector. Liberals are blocking pipelines, banning exports, and introducing a carbon tax. Meanwhile, the U.S. is lifting export bans, building pipelines, selling more of its oil, and has no carbon tax.

When will the Prime Minister stand up for Canadian oil and jobs, instead of pandering to his anti-Canadian special interest groups in the United States?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure there are millions of Canadians and many more millions of Americans who are celebrating today as the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United States restart a constructive relationship of respect between the two greatest countries in the world with the longest border and the most important trade relationship. Compare that with the relationship between the former prime minister and the current president of the United States.

Let us take a moment and delight in a reawakening of the Canadian-American relationship that will be in the best interests of Canadians and Americans.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, 10 Canadians had a Q&A with the Prime Minister. One of those Canadians was Danny Strilchuk, a young oilfield worker from Edmonton. When he asked the Prime Minister how he would deal with the struggling oil industry, the Prime Minister responded with a sigh and said, just hang in there.

Telling a struggling young man to hang in there is not enough. When will the Prime Minister stop putting up roadblocks, stop raising taxes, and help struggling workers get back to work?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to be standing here with a government that understands that it is time to help workers instead of businesses, and here we have a chance to make a difference for Albertans.

Coming up—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1455)

The Speaker: Order, please. Let us have a little order. The hon. Minister of Employment has the floor. Let us listen to the answer.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, what I am trying to say is that it is important for us to refocus an employment insurance system that helps workers. That is exactly what we are going to be doing in the upcoming budget.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week in Washington, the Prime Minister will be hosted by the Center for American Progress. This anti-Canadian organization has spent years lobbying against Canadian energy and the jobs that it creates. Thousands of Canadian jobs depend upon our natural resource industries, which include forestry, agriculture, and oil and gas.

Why is the Prime Minister focused on photo ops and anti-Canadian lobbyists instead of low taxes and better jobs for Canadians?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will know that a year ago, the Prime Minister met with this very same group in Washington and argued in favour of the Keystone XL pipeline, because we are interested in fashioning arguments that will persuade people that we might have a

good idea, unlike other governments, which were not interested in hearing other arguments because they had all the good ideas.

* * *

[*Translation*]

POVERTY

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the child poverty rate in my riding, Davenport, is above the national average. The child poverty rate is very worrisome. It is often said that a just society can be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members.

Can the Minister of Finance share his plan to lower the child poverty rate?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Davenport for her question.

I share her concerns. My riding of Toronto-Centre has a very high child poverty rate.

In the 2016 budget, we will introduce our Canada child benefit, which will help give hundreds of thousands of children and nine families out of 10 a better future.

* * *

[*English*]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the fact the Liberals keep claiming they want to hold consultations on fundamental changes to our democratic process, it appears they are in fact letting time make the decision. Time is of the essence. The Chief Electoral Officer has warned that he needs six months' lead time to be able to hold a referendum, and ample time to be able to redraw riding boundaries if necessary.

Is the fix in for the Prime Minister's preferred choice and will the government be imposing its new voting system without allowing Canadians a say in a referendum?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise and respond to this line of questioning once again. As I have mentioned in the House, I will be working with the hon. government House leader to convene a parliamentary committee to review and consult with Canadians about a wide range of options, including mandatory voting, online voting, proportional representation, and a ranked ballot. I am sure the member opposite would agree that reducing such a complex conversation to a simple yes or no answer would be a huge disservice to democracy and to Canadians.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AIR CANADA

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is fascinating. We are witnessing a scam, a rip-off, and a monumental injustice. Three weeks ago, the Minister of Transport indicated that he wants to change the Air Canada act in order to prevent further litigation. This week, a bill was added to the Order Paper, but yesterday, in committee, the minister refused to say that he would maintain Air Canada's legal obligations, which were confirmed by the Quebec Superior Court and the Court of Appeal.

Why is the minister treating the 2,600 Aveos workers like cheap disposable parts?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, things have changed a lot in the past four years. I am pleased that Air Canada plans to purchase Bombardier aircraft and also do the maintenance on these planes for at least the next 20 years. That will create quality jobs and continuity for the aerospace industry. At the same time, Air Canada is once again talking to the Government of Manitoba about creating jobs. That is good for the aerospace industry, and it is good for quality jobs for Canadians.

* * *

● (1500)

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you well know, the most exciting green energy research project in Canada is taking place right now in the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia. Five companies are each spending millions of dollars on different models of giant underwater turbines designed to harness the world's most powerful tides. This practical research can make Canada the world leader in this emerging technology.

Will the government commit to making investments in training and infrastructure to ensure that Canada locks in this leadership role in this exciting green industry?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the great work of the member for Cumberland—Colchester, who has long led this file.

We are on the edge of a global technological revolution in renewable energy, and our government will help Canadian companies lead the way. We are committed to investments in renewable energy that will deliver economic growth and clean jobs to Canadians. We have the highest tides in the world, with enormous potential. I am confident Canada will be a world leader in tidal power.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had better get my ears checked, because I thought I heard the Minister of Democratic Institutions say that referendums are a disservice to democracy. Just to be clear about this, a referendum would take place on the option the government is putting before people. That is not too complicated to be dealt with by a yes or no answer.

It sure looks to me like what is going on here is that the Liberals are spinning their wheels. It takes six months to set up a referendum, according to the Chief Electoral Officer, and it takes two years to do an electoral redistribution process. If they take long enough, they can guarantee that the only option to replace the first-past-the post system is the one the Prime Minister has favoured from the very beginning.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure where the question was in that, but perhaps I will take this opportunity to assure all Canadians that the process we have committed to is an inclusive and meaningful consultation process. We will listen to Canadians in all corners of this great nation to ensure that the changes we bring forward represent and reflect their needs, and our capacity as a strong democracy.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, given that Quebec is not yet a country, it is at the mercy of Ottawa's decisions in matters of international taxation. The decision by the Canada Revenue Agency to grant an amnesty to 20 millionaires who were hiding their money in tax havens deprives Quebec of revenue it needs.

Does the government realize that these secret deals translate into less money for health, less money for early childhood education centres, and less money for education? Does it realize that?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to repeat the answer I gave earlier, which my colleague did not understand. There is no amnesty and there is only one set of rules.

The CRA exposed the scheme and has been conducting taxpayer audits. The CRA has taken legal action. This matter is still under investigation and has not yet been resolved.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources said that the Liberal government shares energy east's objectives to convince the people. The government's job is not to convince people, but to listen to people. Even the White House disagrees with Ottawa, as Mr. Kerry said yesterday.

Can the minister explain how energy east's objectives are compatible with the commitments his government made at the Paris conference, commitments that the Prime Minister renewed in Washington this morning?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we said that the common objective was to move our natural resources to markets sustainably.

Business of the House

I do not know whether there are members on the other side of the House who do not share that objective, but we know that is what this government believes, and I am sure that is what the official opposition believes. However, there is only one way that would happen, and that is if there was a credible regulatory process where all Canadians can have their view, rather than the path to failure, which was the style of the former government.

* * *

● (1505)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Jennifer Simons, Chairperson of the National Assembly of Suriname and the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent on a point of order.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, we all know that things can get pretty heated in question period sometimes. That never happens to me, but some people get excited. To avoid such excesses, it is important for all parliamentarians to have the correct documents in hand. I therefore seek the consent of the House to table the *Fiscal Monitor*, a Department of Finance publication.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[*English*]**POINTS OF ORDER**

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF CANADA, 2007

The Speaker: On a different point of order, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a different point of order.

I have a document from the Department of Finance, from the 2006-07 year-end budget, that identifies a \$13.8 billion surplus under the last Liberal government, which the Conservative government turned into a \$150—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It is always good to see everyone so united. This is really debate, but I will ask if there is unanimous consent to table the document.

Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, it does require unanimous consent for a member of Parliament to table a document, unless that member of Parliament happens to be a minister. The Minister of Finance does not need unanimous consent. He could table his own department's report right now.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, who has great knowledge of the rules of order and who knows that is more debate than a point of order.

I will now turn to him for the Thursday question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the government House leader could inform the House as to the business of the House for the remainder of this week and for the week after we return from our hard-working constituency week.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps there might be consent for me to table this very incisive statement that members are about to hear.

[*Translation*]

Today, we will continue our second reading debate of Bill C-6 on citizenship. Tomorrow, we will continue to discuss Bill C-2 on the middle-class tax cut. There have been discussions among several members, and I believe we will be able to conclude second reading debate tomorrow. Next week, as my colleague mentioned, we will be working very hard in our constituencies.

[*English*]

Monday, March 21 will be the final opposition day in this supply cycle.

On Tuesday, we will take up debate again on Bill C-6, until 4 p.m. I know that members on all sides are looking forward with great enthusiasm to the Minister of Finance presenting his budget at that time.

On Wednesday and Thursday of the week we are back, the House will have the two first days of the budget debate.

Finally, on a serious note, there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, one minister of the Crown be permitted to make a statement pursuant to Standing Order 31 on Friday, March 11, 2016.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1510)

[English]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last left the question, the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City had six minutes remaining in the time for his remarks, and of course the usual five minutes for questions and comments afterward.

The hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to reiterate, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

Bill C-6 also contains provisions to repeal the current intent-to-reside requirement for citizenship. The previous government's legislation required adult applicants to formally declare that they intend to continue to reside in Canada after being granted citizenship. This has created great concern among some new Canadians. They fear that their citizenship could be revoked if they move outside of Canada, regardless of the rationale for moving. In light of today's global economy, we require flexibility in the movement of our citizens around the globe, without the threat of losing the highly desired Canadian citizenship that we all cherish.

This government respects this right to move outside of Canada, which is guaranteed under section 6 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is something that all Canadians should be allowed to do without fear or repercussion.

Another proposed change in this bill is the provision to help immigrants achieve citizenship more quickly. Currently, the Citizenship Act requires applicants to be physically present in Canada for four of the six years immediately prior to applying for citizenship. Our government is proposing to reduce this time. Prior to submitting an application for citizenship, an applicant would be required to be physically present for three out of the preceding five years. Essentially, applicants could apply one year sooner than they can now. This would offer more flexibility for immigrants who may need to travel outside of Canada for personal or work reasons.

Furthermore, since the first Citizenship Act of 1947, citizenship applicants have been required to have a reasonable knowledge of English or French and an understanding of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. However, the previous government's changes to the Citizenship Act expanded the age range of applicants who must meet the language and knowledge requirements from those aged 18 to 54 to ages 14 to 64. This added an additional 14 years to the age range affected by this language requirement.

Government Orders

Our government is proposing to reinstate the former age requirement, eliminating a potential barrier to citizenship. For younger applicants, learning English or French and having an adequate knowledge of Canada can be achieved through schooling. For those applicants in the older age group, language skills and information about Canada are offered through our wide range of integration and community services. All applicants between the ages of 18 and 54 would still be required to provide evidence of their ability to understand and converse in English or French. Similarly, they would continue to be required to pass a knowledge test about Canada. That requires applicants to have a firm understanding of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship, with a slightly lesser focus on the War of 1812 than currently exists.

I heard over and over again from immigrants who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s that they do not consider themselves to be hyphenated Canadians. They consider themselves Canadians, as do I. They were horrified and terrified that they could be targeted for deportation by their own government. This government wants that to change. A Canadian is a Canadian and will always be a Canadian under the changes proposed in this bill.

Our government is proposing to make it easier for immigrants to build successful lives in Canada, reunite families, and help strengthen the economic foundation to the benefit of all Canadians. Bill C-6 would credit time spent as a non-permanent resident toward the new three-year physical presence requirement for citizenship, for up to one year. This proposed change would allow any person authorized to be in Canada as a temporary resident or a protected person to count a day spent in Canada as a half day towards meeting the physical presence requirement for citizenship.

Last week, I spoke with an immigrant about the anticipated changes to the Citizenship Act. This woman has been in Canada for four years, two years as a student and two years on a work permit. She is committed to Canada and to becoming Canadian. She was happy to know that some of her time spent in Canada would now count toward her citizenship requirements. As in the case of this woman, the time credit would encourage skilled individuals to come to Canada to study or work, and would benefit groups like protected persons, and parents and grandparents on visitor visas.

I can also confirm that the changes proposed by Bill C-6 will not compromise the security of Canadians. In fact, there are several provisions in this bill that would strengthen the fair application of the right to become a Canadian citizen and provide protection against abuse of the process to do so. For instance, the Citizenship Act currently prohibits a person under a probation order, on parole, or incarcerated from being granted citizenship, or from counting that time toward meeting the physical presence requirements for citizenship.

Government Orders

•(1515)

However, these current prohibitions do not include conditional sentences served in Canada; that is, sentences served in the community with conditions. As a result, an applicant who is sentenced to a conditional sentence order could conceivably be granted citizenship, or could count that time toward meeting the physical presence requirements. The amendments in the bill would change that for both new applications and those still being processed.

Another provision relates to the requirement to maintain the conditions for citizenship until taking the oath, which I might digress, will respect the court's decision on appropriate attire.

Under provisions of the previous government's Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act, applicants were not permitted to take the oath of citizenship if, in between the time the decision to grant citizenship and the time to take the oath, a period that is typically two to three months, they no longer met the requirements.

Let me make one last case. At present, citizenship officers do not have the authority to seize fraudulent documents. Bill C-6 would change that.

I remind the House that one of the most effective tools for achieving successful integration into Canadian life is by achieving Canadian citizenship. The bill would ensure that any and all who become Canadian citizens are treated equally under the law, whether they are born in Canada, naturalized in Canada, or hold a dual citizenship.

•(1520)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member spoke about hyphenated Canadians. I am an immigrant myself, so I will ask a question on behalf of the immigrant communities that I have been speaking to.

The member talked about the language requirement and how his government is reversing what it used to be. He must know that past Liberal governments, between 1977 and 1984, and between 1993 and 2005, had a language requirement for the aged 55 to 64 bracket. I want to ask him why it was okay then but it is not okay today. I am looking for the reasoning on that.

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, governments change and times change. We are committed under this bill to ensuring that Canadians are able to get their citizenship as quickly as possible under the rules that we have established.

We have taken off 14 years under the current legislation. We feel it is important to help those citizens go through the requirements, to meet the new requirements, and then to get their citizenship, so we can move away from the idea of a hyphenated Canadian and have everyone become one class of citizen, a Canadian.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the member's comments. He articulated a very important issue. The bill does in fact rectify a number of issues that the Conservative government had raised.

The question I would like to ask the member is related to the whole issue of getting one's citizenship. As he has pointed out, it

reduces it from four of six years down to three of five years, which is great to see.

There is another aspect that the legislation does not necessarily deal with, but it is an equally important issue. That is the issue of processing times. We saw processing times to get citizenship increase quite dramatically under the Conservatives, from less than a year to over two years. Quite often it would even go to four to five years for someone to get their citizenship. Therefore, under the Conservatives we saw an increase in time for getting citizenship. Someone had to be here for four years, and wait more years to physically get the citizenship because of processing times.

I wonder if the member might want to comment. We have a good bill before us today, worthy of support, but one of the other things we need to do is to look at how we can process citizenship fees in a quicker fashion.

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, the minister spoke in the House about the need to improve the processing times. We saw them languish under the previous government. We are committed to helping immigrants attain their citizenship as expeditiously as possible.

The idea of being able to move through the application process will be addressed in some ways through the changes in Bill C-6. There are other administrative changes that our minister has committed to doing. I look forward to seeing those implemented so we can allow immigrants to become Canadian citizens as quickly as possible.

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was heartened to hear the member's comments on the balancing act between having folks come in with a knowledge of English and also making sure that those who are older are not prevented from being citizens, or prevented from even attempting to come to Canada. Under the previous Conservative government, my *nonno* and *nonna* could not become citizens because they only spoke Italian. I would like to hear the member's comments about how the new legislation would address that issue.

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, the issue of language is something I have heard about from many of my constituents. By reducing the age requirements, we would be able to allow older family members to come and join their families. We know that they can contribute to the functioning of our society, our families, can help with child care and other tasks, and can learn the language through other means. This will allow those family members to be reunited, to support their families in Canada, and to become functioning members of Canadian society.

•(1525)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. I would like to inform the room that the five hours of debate is done, and now we will progress. What that means is this.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

During the first five hours, we have 20-minute periods for debate, which may be divided up. After that, we have 10-minute periods for debate, with five minutes of questions.

The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak here today to express my support for Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another act. I plan to vote in favour of the bill, and I encourage all of my hon. colleagues to do the same.

Canadians know that our strength lies in our diversity, as the Prime Minister has been saying from the beginning.

We know that the cultural, political, and economic success of our country is because of our diversity, not in spite of it. We need to keep that in mind as we study the changes proposed in Bill C-6. These changes relate to Canada's success throughout its history as a cosmopolitan nation. What is more important, however, is the fact that this bill aims to bring Canadian citizenship and immigration into the economy and reality of the 21st century. From now on, diversity will be at the very heart of our success and what we offer the rest of the world.

Generally speaking, Bill C-6 amends the Citizenship Act in three ways. First of all, it repeals the 2015 amendments to the Citizenship Act that make it possible to revoke the citizenship of dual nationals who engage in certain activities identified as being against the national interest. Secondly, it gives citizenship applicants greater flexibility, and finally, it improves the integrity of the citizenship program.

How will these changes to the Citizenship Act affect Canada's future economic prosperity? That is what we are about to explore, because that is what I want to talk about.

Our changes are going to help prospective immigrants achieve their economic objectives, build ties, and create a sense of belonging in Canada, which will be beneficial to all Canadians.

The 2015 measures required anyone applying for Canadian citizenship to express their intention to stay in the country after obtaining citizenship. They extended the physical presence requirement for applicants by requiring them to be present in Canada for a longer period before being able to apply for citizenship. Applicants were no longer able to count the time they spent in Canada before becoming permanent residents in the calculation of the length of their physical presence. Finally, the age range of applicants required to illustrate knowledge of one official language, of Canada, and of the responsibilities of citizenship was increased to 14 to 64. Previously, only applicants 18 to 54 had to meet the language and knowledge criteria. We are going to get rid of the intention to reside rule.

Through our changes to the Citizenship Act we are fulfilling a promise that the government made when it received its mandate. Moving around constantly has become commonplace in the 21st century. Thanks to our changes, applicants will no longer have to

worry about losing their Canadian citizenship for not staying in Canada, even though they said they would.

We will reduce the physical presence criteria. It will now be possible to apply for citizenship one year sooner than under the 2015 provisions. The path to a permanent place within Canadian society will be shorter.

We know that economic success and cultural integration work out better when newcomers feel an attachment to their new country, and that is what Bill C-6 will focus on for future generations of immigrants.

We will allow applicants to count the time they spent in Canada as temporary residents or protected persons before becoming permanent residents. We know that quite often, immigrants start to become attached to Canada before they become permanent residents.

• (1530)

This change will help encourage foreign students and experienced workers to come to Canada. These are the types of people who may be here temporarily but who ultimately decide to stay.

Canada remains an attractive place to study and learn. We want students from around the world to choose to study in Canada and, potentially, to make their careers here.

Currently, anyone between the ages of 14 and 64 must demonstrate knowledge of one official language and take a knowledge test on Canada and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. These rules will now apply to people between the ages of 18 and 54.

Younger and older applicants will have fewer barriers and will feel a strong sense of belonging in our society as citizens of this country.

Our government is abolishing or amending some recent changes to the Citizenship Act for some very simple reasons: we strongly believe that Canada is a land of diversity and inclusion.

We place a high value on diversity and inclusion, which is consistent with our firm and ambitious resolve to make Canada and the world better and safer. We often take the importance of diversity for granted. There is no doubt that we are a better, stronger, and more prosperous country because of our diversity.

Canadians are proud of their country and its values. We welcome immigrants, and we help them settle in, integrate, and succeed. This is our past, our present, and our future.

When an immigrant succeeds in Canada, the whole country becomes stronger and more united. These newcomers bring their strength, which makes us all stronger.

The changes I presented today will benefit all Canadians.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

I immigrated to Canada with my family in 1985. My wife is also an immigrant. She arrived from Singapore in 1990.

Government Orders

As the member knows, reducing the number of days that a person must be physically present in Canada before applying for citizenship and taking that into account does not really have anything to do with diversity. Diversity does not begin at four years or three years or six years. It is the Canadian experience. We experience it every day.

Would the member like to comment on that? What sense does it make to go from four out of six years to three out of five years?

• (1535)

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

I would like him to know that I appreciate his concern. We must not forget one thing: Canada is competing with other countries today.

It is trying to attract those people who will make the best contribution in the long term. I am referring to people who will come here, want to settle here, start a family, pursue a career, grow as individuals, prosper, become part of a community, and integrate.

Nowadays, people can choose where they want to go. They have options. Canada will have rules that are clear, straightforward, and accessible, and that can make a difference.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to recognize that prior to the Conservative government making a change a couple of years ago, it used to be three out of five years. It was the Conservative government that ultimately made the change to increase the time one had to be living in Canada from three out of five years to four out of six years. In part, what this bill would do in qualifying for citizenship is bring it back to the way it was.

When this legislation came before us, I was here during that debate. From coast to coast to coast, there was significant opposition to it. Stakeholders were concerned, whether it was over the citizenship angle in terms of the time needed for qualifying or over the two-tier citizenship that was being created by the former government.

In good part, this bill would rectify a serious problem that the Conservative government created not that long ago. It was just a couple of years ago.

I wonder if the member would look at this in terms of the amount of resistance and opposition there was and agree that there was in fact a need to make the changes we have here today and that it is the right thing to do. Canadians ultimately support Canadian citizenship, and we want people to feel good about becoming citizens. There was never a need to make the change in the first place.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and for the introduction he made.

The member is entirely correct. The ideas behind the legislation enhance it. The fact is, we are in 2016. In this day and time, we do have to recognize the reality that we are faced with. People do come here to our country from everywhere. Canada is a beacon. People have a choice nowadays, and they want to commit to this country. When they come here, they want to know that we have clear rules that they will be able to comply with.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have done before in many previous speeches in this House, I will start with a Yiddish proverb: if you walk straight, you will not stumble.

This bill stumbles. It zigs and it zags. It takes too many leaps where a few minor tweaks would do.

I want to quote the late George Jonas, *National Post* columnist and fantastic author, who sadly passed away January 10 of this year, on patriotism and citizenship. He said:

My reservoir of patriotic feelings is exhausted by Canada, and citizenship without patriotic feelings is a sham.

My family is the culmination of two immigrant stories in Canada. My wife Evangeline and her family immigrated to Canada in 1990. They arrived from Singapore, a mixed family of Chinese and Jewish heritage, speaking Hokkien, a Chinese dialect, at home, as well as English from the British educational system in Singapore. I still debate my father-in-law on whether it is “stroller” or “pram”.

They became citizens in 1994, grateful to be here, grateful to be welcomed. My father-in-law has wanted to shake the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney's hand ever since the comments he made in Singapore about being open and welcoming to immigrants.

My family left Communist Poland in the early 1980s during martial law and the rioting at the Gdansk shipyards in my birth city. I grew up in Montreal and for a time lived in Sorel, where my father worked at the shipyard. My mother learned French, my father English. It was a sort of division of labour.

I attended a French school, Guillaume-Vignal, then Royal George, eventually learning French and English. Many immigrants in my generation call themselves the Bill 101 kids.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

We are proud to be Canadians who made the effort to learn Canada's official languages and who understand the importance of our country's linguistic duality. I am a Polish immigrant who is married to a Jewish Chinese woman, so a lot of this bill's content affects us. Of course, the communities we play an active part in have a variety of views on the content of the Canadian Citizenship Act.

[*English*]

I want to fully address the issue of revocation first. It is not two-tier citizenship. I do not feel two-tiered, anyway.

Thanks to international law commitments, Canada cannot and will not leave a person stateless. Their place of birth is not important in the current provisions of the law as they stand, and in cases of fraud, citizenship can still be revoked, a measure I think the government for retaining.

Government Orders

Since 1977, the Government of Canada has revoked citizenship in 54 cases, seven of those connected to World War II. Legally they lost their citizenship because they lied on their forms upon entry, which is fraud, but morally, in the example cases I am going to use, Jacob Fast and Helmut Oberlander were found to have participated in crimes against humanity and genocide.

The technicality for refusing them entry and permission to keep their citizenship in Canada was that they lied on their CIC forms, but the truth is that many of those cases were revoked because of the moral imperative in rejecting acts of mass murder and systemic violence against civilians, which are war crimes.

The Toronto 18 ringleader, Zakaria Amara, whose citizenship was revoked, is serving a life sentence but is eligible for parole in 2016. I want to read what he was convicted of. He was convicted of knowingly contributing to, directly or indirectly, a terrorist group for the purpose of enhancing the ability of the group to carry out an act of terror and intending to cause an explosion that could kill people or damage property for the benefit of a terrorist group.

He admitted to a leadership role in organizing a winter camp north of Toronto in December 2015, where recruits were given basic combat training and indoctrination in extremist jihadi causes.

Montreal jihadist Sami Elabi burned and shot his own passport in a video published online. Does he deserve to keep his citizenship? I accept their acts of violent disloyalty and I do not need a form from CIC to confirm that. That is legalism.

A Canadian of Somali heritage, a student, burned his passport in a video posted in Somali news on BartamahaOnline. That video was posted November 28, 2014. Does he deserve to keep his citizenship?

The line “a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian” is a slogan. It is not public policy discourse.

When writing on the prosecution of war criminals, the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies wrote on the Helmut Oberlander case I mentioned before:

As Canadians, we have to ask ourselves if we are prepared to share buses, playgrounds, offices or community centers with mass murderers. These people may not be an immediate threat to one's safety, but they are certainly a threat to the morals and values held by this country as a whole.

Convictions for terrorism, high treason, and espionage are matters of loyalty to our country and to our communities, and the government could have amended the law to target only the most egregious of terrorism cases. The government could have narrowed it down and clarified it further to very limited cases of revocation if there was a concern out there. However, it did not do that. Rather, it is wiping out the entire section, and I am deeply disappointed by that decision.

I asked a question earlier on the residency requirement, and I will speak a bit to this aspect.

The move from four out of six to three out of five years would reduce the length of the residency requirement and also remove the clause that relates to the intention to reside in Canada. I believe in the positive declaration of principle and intent to reside in Canada. It is a clause that should be retained. Like many new Canadians, I expect those who are seeking citizenship to join us permanently and live

with us here in fellowship as we continue to build a Canada we can all be proud of and pass on to the next generation afterward.

If there was a concern over the wording or the phrasing of the law as it is, then why did the government not propose an amendment to it, instead of simply erasing that wording in the law? The intention of the original section was correct in that we welcome new citizens such as myself. I received my citizenship in 1989, four years after I came here. We welcome new citizens with the understanding that they have joined the great Canadian family to help us build a society based on natural freedoms. What groups or stakeholders are calling for reducing the time spent in Canada before applying for citizenship? I am looking for the groups or the studies out there. What is better about three years versus four years?

The time spent in Canada is not time wasted. It is time spent learning languages, as I did, and learning about the culture. It is not idle time but time adjusting and time integrating. It takes four years to earn a bachelor's degree to be an expert in Canadian studies. Why not keep four out of six years for Canadian citizenship? Why can we not be both welcoming and vigilant?

The Liberal member for Markham—Unionville stated the following concerns in the 41st Parliament while debating an immigration government bill. I will quote from the *Hansard* on February 27, 2014, the *House of Commons Debates*, pages 3321 to 3322, where he stated:

There is some sense to the fifth, the idea of increased physical presence, that in four out of six years people should be here more than half the year, some 183 days. I have some sympathy with that because I have some concern with the phenomenon of citizens of convenience.

The member also suggested:

Why not have strict...requirements for health care? That would really target people who are citizens of convenience.

He further stated:

It speaks to the question of citizens of convenience. We want measures in place to deter that. I sympathize with that goal, in principle. However, with this specific measure, I agree that the minister could, in theory, take someone's citizenship away because he went to work overseas for a length of time, when he had previously stated his intent not to.

I do not always agree with the Conservatives, but I do not think it likely that a minister, even a Conservative minister, would do that. I do not take this risk that the professor raised too seriously.

That member is no less than the current member for Markham—Unionville, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship in the Liberal government, who is moving Bill C-6. Some of this is not in the bill and some even contradicts itself. I think reducing the length of years necessary to apply for citizenship and eliminating the intent-to-reside clause represents a contradiction there.

Government Orders

To conclude, over the past years that the Conservative government was in power, over 1.6 million immigrants became citizens, and record numbers came to Canada and became permanent residents. I know my colleagues and I welcomed them all.

I am an immigrant; my wife is an immigrant. We grew up at opposite ends of this country. We actually met here in Ottawa in a parliamentary internship program, of all things. What is more Canadian than meeting in the capital of our great country?

Our Canada is one that values citizenship and promotes loyalty to the community. It is a Canada that welcomes new Canadians with an expectation that they are joining our larger extended family.

The amendments proposed in Bill C-6 go too far. This bill does not walk straight. It stumbles repeatedly. Wording changes or further clarification would have achieved the goals of the minister. I see the striking out of entire sections. Where we could have used tweaks, we see too many leaps.

I cannot support this bill as it is presented today before this House, and I urge all members to oppose it.

● (1545)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend for his very interesting speech.

[*Translation*]

It is always good to have Bill 101 kids who speak both languages and live in western Canada.

[*English*]

I appreciate his family's story. I also want to introduce a Yiddish proverb, which is, "Does it make a difference to the turkey if it is slaughtered for Passover or for Purim? No, because a turkey is still a turkey", in the same way a Canadian is still a Canadian.

When we look at the issue with respect to citizenship, I fully understand there are different perspectives to this. We have every reason to think badly of people who tear up their Canadian passports or burn them. There is no doubt about it. However, we all know that a Canadian citizen who is purely and only a Canadian citizen cannot lose his or her citizenship for any of the acts that the law provides for, which essentially created two classes of Canadians: one who had dual citizenship and could lose that citizenship and another who could not. In the United States, as the member knows, this would be thrown out on equal protection grounds.

Does the member recognize that we cannot, through international treaties, remove Canadian citizenship from a Canadian who is solely a Canadian citizen on these grounds? Does the member not agree that on equal protection grounds we should not remove citizenship for anybody for these acts?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I do have Yiddish proverbs, but I do not want to start a battle of Yiddish proverbs back and forth with other members. I do love them, though.

On people who renounce their citizenship nowadays, there is a line that is used on that side, which is 2016. I think we can go beyond just looking at CIC forms or a file with a department for those people who choose to renounce it for reasons of violent disloyalty to our country.

I do not feel any less Canadian because I came from somewhere else, moved to Canada and became a naturalized citizen. My wife feels the same way I do. It is not a two-tier citizenship. It is one tier. There is only one type of Canadian.

However, there are Canadians who engage in violent terrorism, espionage, and high treason. If the government wanted to, it could restrict it down to only the most serious of cases.

I do not know if the member was also implying that perhaps we should violate our international treaty obligations and pull out of these treaties, or make it possible to do this. I would disagree with that. However, in cases of violent disloyalty to the country, we have a responsibility to act accordingly.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, my colleague said that he was a Bill 101 kid. My colleague probably knows that the purpose of Bill 101, which was proposed by Camille Laurin, was to make French the official language of Quebec, in fact the only language of Quebec.

In light of his experience, does my colleague believe that Bill 101 was a good thing for him? What does he think of the fact that the Supreme Court of Canada basically gutted Bill 101 based on the 1982 Constitution?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question, but I am not sure it has anything to do with the bill we are debating today.

My children are currently learning French in Calgary. The French language is very much alive in western Canada, and many people from Quebec have moved there. There are also many Franco-Albertans who are passing the language down.

I do not want to comment on Supreme Court decisions here in the House. I am not a lawyer or an expert in the matter. I would say that yes, learning another language was a good thing for me. I think that every Canadian should seize any opportunity to learn another language, whether it be French, German, Portuguese, or Italian. I do not think that we should limit ourselves to just learning English or French. There are many languages to choose from in Canada.

[*English*]

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is truly a pleasure to rise in the House today in support of Bill C-6, for this is very much a bill that speaks to the heart of why I am so proud to be Canadian and what makes our country the envy of the world.

Government Orders

In my first speech in the House as the member of Parliament for Scarborough Centre, I spoke about how my husband and I came to Canada from Pakistan about 16 years ago to provide better opportunities for our children. Before we moved here, there was one big thing we knew about the country, which is why we came here, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

People around the world know two things about Canada. We love hockey and we are the country of the charter. This is a document that says every Canadian and everyone within our borders have certain inalienable rights: the right to associate with whom we wish, communicate what we wish, and worship how we wish. The charter speaks to choice and equality, that whether we are Canadian by birth or by choice, we all are Canadian.

I live in Scarborough, one of the most diverse communities in Canada, where many people have chosen to settle and build better lives for their families. During the election campaign, I heard from many families who were deeply concerned by some of the provisions in the previous Conservative government's Bill C-24. Of particular concern were the so-called two-tier citizenship provisions, which allow government ministers to strip dual citizens or those eligible to obtain one of their Canadian citizenship.

Let me be clear that terrorism is abhorrent and should be punished to the full extent of the law. However, let me be equally clear that terrorists belong in jails, not on a plane overseas. This is a matter of principle. We cannot create two different tiers of Canadian citizenship and we cannot ship our problems overseas for other people to deal with. That has never been the Canadian way.

My husband Salman and I have two sons. Umaid is 17 years old and Usman is 15. They are like many Canadian children. They love basketball and the Toronto Raptors, and were two of my best door knockers during the campaign. Usman was born in Canada, while Umaid was born just before we left Pakistan and came here as a baby. They have much in common with their classmates, but there is one difference. While Usman was born here and Umaid was not, both are still dual citizens and both could be stripped of their citizenship under Bill C-24.

How can I tell my two sons that they are different from their classmates? They both feel Canadian to their core and deeply love this country and all it stands for. Should Umaid and Usman really be treated as second-class citizens? This is wrong, and it goes against the fundamental values of the country they both grew up in, which shaped them into the fine young men they have become.

That is why I was so proud, not just as a candidate but as a mother, when the Prime Minister came to my campaign office for a rally during the first week of the election campaign and promised to repeal this provision of Bill C-24. My sons and many more sons and daughters heard the Prime Minister reassert those core Canadian values when he told us, "A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian". With Bill C-6, none of our children will ever again have to feel like second-class citizens in the country they love.

Our diversity is our strength and we are stronger, not in spite of our diversity but because of its diversity.

There are a number of other worthy elements of Bill C-6 that I would like to draw to the attention of the House. Of particular

interest to my constituents in Scarborough Centre are the changes to the language testing requirements, returning the age range required to pass the language testing to the age group 18 to 54.

• (1555)

Encouraging family reunification is an important goal of this government, including parents and grandparents, and these provisions will make a major difference in this regard.

I know many Filipino and Gujarati families in Scarborough where the grandparents have come to Canada to join their children and grandchildren, and are making vitally important contributions to both our society and our economy.

With one Filipino family in my neighbourhood, the grandmother comes to take the kids to school first thing in the morning, and then takes them home afterwards and looks after them into the evening. In the summer, she takes the children to summer camp and on activities and outings around the city. By taking care of her grandchildren during the day, she allows her son and her daughter-in-law to both work full time, contributing to our economy and allowing them to provide more opportunities for their children.

I know one Gujarati families in Scarborough grandmother who looks after six grandchildren. I do not know how she does it, but these grandmothers and grandfathers and the child care they provide, as well as the emotional support they provide to their children, are invaluable to our economy.

I agree that new Canadian citizens should be required to meet a certain level of English or French proficiency. However, do we really want to force the 64-year-old Filipino grandmother to pass a demanding language test? I would rather have her grandchildren teach her while they are at the park.

Finally, I would like to touch on the various changes to residency requirements to applying for Canadian citizenship that would be made by Bill C-6. The proposed bill will help permanent residents become Canadian citizens sooner by reducing the time they must be physically present in Canada before being able to apply, from four years to three years. Applicants will also receive credit for time they were present in Canada without being a permanent resident, for example, if they were studying on a student visa or a skilled worker.

My feeling is this. If individuals are hard-working contributing members of society, if they love our great country as much as we do and want to take that next step and join us as a citizen, then I see no reason to make them wait so long. They are exactly the kind of person we want to join our Canadian family.

With Bill C-6, this government delivers on its promise to restore the integrity of Canadian citizenship and reaffirms our Canadian values of openness, fairness, and equality. Today, we can proudly say once again, with our heads held high, that we live in the greatest country in the world, and that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.

Government Orders

●(1600)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, oftentimes today, as we have sat through this debate, we have heard references to the effect that what Bill C-24 did was effectively designate people as second-class citizens.

This morning my colleague from Durham talked quite eloquently about the privileges of having citizenship. The expectation is that those who become citizens of our country would live by the principles of freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Why should those who wish to do harm to Canada, to their fellow citizens, be able to keep their citizenship?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, I agree that we need to be concerned about security. We also need to be concerned for our Canadian values. If we allow terrorists to change who we are as Canadians, if we allow terror groups to alter our fundamental Canadian identity, then the terrorists will have succeeded.

Terrorists belong in one place, and that is in jail. We need to put terrorists in prison, not on a plane. We must punish those who commit acts of terror to the fullest extent of the law, but we cannot create a two-tier justice system, and we cannot allow politicians to decide who gets to be Canadian.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will support the bill, which repeals many of the discriminatory and unconstitutional changes that the previous government made to the Canadian Citizenship Act. However, like my colleagues, I am disappointed that Bill C-6 does not go further.

After hearing her eloquent remarks in support of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, I would like to ask my colleague from Scarborough Centre whether she intends to press the minister not to revoke anyone's citizenship without giving that person the opportunity to participate in a court hearing.

[*English*]

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the Liberal Party promised to repeal the unfair and reprehensible parts of the previous Conservative bill, Bill C-24, and that is exactly what we are doing with Bill C-6.

The two-tier citizenship provisions that were contrary to the Canadian values of equality and inclusiveness will be gone. We are allowing hard-working permanent residents who are contributing to Canadian society to become citizens more quickly, and we are making it easier for grandmothers and grandfathers to join their children and grandchildren without language testing.

To repeal the bill entirely would be irresponsible and rash. The legislation did several things that I agree with, and I hope that the hon. member would as well. For example, the act restored the citizenship of so-called lost Canadians, such as the descendants of Canadian citizens, who were born abroad and were shocked to discover they were not Canadian citizens. The legislation also allowed for a faster path to citizenship for those who were serving or had served in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Surely, the hon. member would agree that these are measures worth keeping.

●(1605)

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a question regarding the duration before one could obtain Canadian citizenship. I would like to have her brief comments regarding the reduction from what is now a rule of four years, for all intents and purposes, to a rule of three years.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, yes, we are reducing the time period from four years to three years because we feel that those people who are contributing to the economy and want to join us and enjoy their rights as Canadian citizens should be allowed to apply earlier. The time period will be reduced from four years to three years before they can apply for Canadian citizenship.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in the House to the important changes, proposed by the government, relating to the Citizenship Act. These changes would go a long way to encourage immigrants to take the path to full membership and permanent belonging in Canadian society.

Obtaining Canadian citizenship more quickly would ensure the best transition possible for newcomers into Canada. Immigrants who become Canadian citizens tend to achieve more economic success. That is good for all Canadians. The proposed legislative change would allow greater flexibility for applicants to meet citizenship requirements, thereby also helping to foster a sense of belonging and connection to Canada.

Overall, the changes would make an impact in three major areas of concern. First, the changes would remove portions of the act that were implemented in 2015, which clearly created two-tiered citizenship. Second, the changes would provide a higher degree of flexibility for applicants to meet requirements for citizenship. Third, the changes would further enhance the integrity of the citizenship program.

Today, I want to address the proposed changes that would give people applying to become Canadians greater flexibility to meet these requirements. These changes would allow immigrants to achieve citizenship faster, which is a goal worth pursuing. The rationale behind the proposed changes lies in the government's goal to encourage immigrants to more fully integrate into Canadian society and to help them build successful lives in Canada.

I want to look at one specific change among several that the government is proposing. It concerns the ability of prospective citizens to count the time they spend in Canada before they become permanent residents toward meeting the citizenship requirements. In the legislation that received royal assent in 2014, this ability was removed. Our government simply wants to restore it.

Government Orders

Under the new proposal, time spent in Canada as a temporary resident or a protected person prior to becoming a permanent resident would count toward meeting the physical presence requirement. The Citizenship Act would be amended to allow each day that a person was physically present as a temporary resident or protected person to be counted as a half-day toward meeting the physical presence requirement for citizenship, up to a maximum of 365 days. Moreover, every day that a person was physically present in Canada as a permanent resident would count as one day of physical presence for citizenship. This means that an applicant could accumulate up to 365 days as a temporary resident or as a protected person. They could accumulate the remaining required 730 days as a permanent resident to meet the 1,095 days of physical presence required to become a citizen.

Who could benefit from this credit? Temporary residents, such as international students, would be one group. Foreign workers would benefit as well. Also, parents and grandparents in Canada with valid temporary resident status could apply this credited time to their citizenship application. In addition, protected persons, those whom Canada has accepted as convention refugees, who went on to become permanent residents could also apply this time in Canada toward the physical presence requirements. This is about recognizing that immigrants often begin building an attachment to Canada before they become permanent residents.

These priorities draw heavily from our election platform commitments. As the minister said earlier, allowing time spent residing in Canada before becoming a permanent resident to count toward citizenship requirements would be received favourably, especially by post-secondary students who come to this country to study and want to stay here and build their careers here and continue contributing to Canada. The Prime Minister has also asked the minister and his cabinet colleagues to reinstate the credit given to international students for time they spend in Canada before becoming permanent residents, and to eliminate the provision that requires citizenship applicants to intend to continue to reside in Canada if granted citizenship.

The reasons the government has for repealing some of the recent changes to the Citizenship Act are simple. We are committed to a Canada that is both diverse and inclusive. It is easy to take diversity for granted in a country like Canada. We have raised children who think nothing of hearing five or six different languages spoken on the playground or at school.

• (1610)

One-fifth of Canadians were born elsewhere. They chose to immigrate to Canada. More than half the citizens of Toronto were born outside of our country.

Against this backdrop, the importance of diversity can sometimes be taken for granted. There is no doubt we are a better country, a stronger country, a more successful country, because of this diversity. Canadians are proud of our country and proud of our values.

We welcome immigrants, we help them settle, we help them integrate, and we help them succeed. This is our history, it is our present, and it is our future. We encourage all immigrants to take the path of full membership in Canadian society. One of the strongest

pillars for a successful integration into Canadian life is achieving citizenship.

I am sure, as members of Parliament, we have all been at citizenship ceremonies and we can all attest to how moving these functions can be. It is an important step in the life of immigrants.

The success of our immigrants is our success as a strong and united country. The strength of our new Canadians is what makes us all stronger.

I urge every member of this House to consider supporting Bill C-6.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Newmarket—Aurora, for his fine speech, and I would like to congratulate the Liberal government for bringing forward this bill. There are a lot of provisions that we, in the NDP, can support.

However, there is one thing I would draw to my colleague's attention. I want to reference the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because I think that is a very important document when we deliberate in this chamber, specifically section 11, under legal rights, which states that anyone charged with an offence has a right to a trial before a court that is unbiased and independent of political or any other influence.

I realize that an offence is different from revocation of citizenship, but I think in this chamber we have to look at all of our laws with the spirit of the charter in mind.

Bill C-24 eliminated the right to a judicial hearing for people who are about to have their citizenship revoked. Civil liberty groups, including the Canadian Bar Association, were against this. I would ask my colleague if he agrees with organizations like the Canadian Bar Association that people who are about to lose their citizenship should always have the right to a fair hearing before an independent and impartial decision-maker, keeping in line with the spirit of the charter, specifically section 11.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, as a lawyer, I am of course supportive of the charter and agree that it is an important facet of our life and our legislative process in Canada, and it needs always to be taken into consideration when we deliberate legislation in this chamber. I agree.

If members recall, the CBA spoke out and was highly critical of Bill C-24, for many reasons. Part of it was that it got rid of the Federal Court of Appeal being able to hear appeals under the revocation of citizenship.

So, our new bill, our new act, would be in line with charter values, would be constitutionally sound, and has been vetted. I appreciate the member raising this question because it is important, as we deliberate, that we ensure that all legislation in this House is aligned with charter values. I am a proponent of that. I thank the member for that question.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also acknowledge the fine comments made by the member for Newmarket—Aurora and his contributions in this chamber on behalf of his constituents.

Government Orders

I wonder, in his experience in noting the diversity of his own riding and the diversity of other areas in and around Toronto, for example, if he would comment on the path to complete integration. People talk a lot about countries that accept newcomers, whether they are asylum seekers or refugees, but sometimes they are stuck in the status of permanent resident or landed immigrant for a long time and do not have the rights or the ability to complete that journey all the way to citizenship.

Would the member for Newmarket—Aurora comment on the value of citizenship for new Canadians, how it facilitates their integration, their economic achievements, and their health outcomes in his riding?

● (1615)

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, in response to the parliamentary secretary's important question, I would say that on this side of the House, we do not pretend to have a monopoly of concern for immigration or the diversity of ridings. As Canadians, we all think that becoming a Canadian citizen is an important and integral step for immigrants and newcomers to Canada.

As I mentioned, we have all been to citizenship ceremonies in our role as a members of Parliament and these are very moving ceremonies. To look into people's eyes who are becoming Canadian citizens and to see their beaming pride, I think is perhaps akin to becoming a parent for the first time. That is what we sense when we see them. It is a monumental step in their lives.

Anything we can do to facilitate that, to make it more efficient, is better for newcomers and better for Canada, because we want immigrants and we want new Canadians to contribute to Canadian society as soon possible. They are more than willing to do so when they are Canadian citizens and are fully integrated into our society. So it is an important step. Moreover, like many of my colleagues, I have a diverse riding in Newmarket—Aurora, and that the diversity continues to grow.

I am a third generation Canadian, but my grandparents came from Ukraine on my dad's side. My mom's mom came from Ireland and my mom's dad came to Upper Canada 250 years ago, after the American Revolution.

We can all appreciate the importance of being integrated into a community, to feel that it matters what we do and that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Becoming a Canadian citizen is a great step in newcomers' lives and it is important that we make it as easy as possible for these wonderful Canadians who will contribute to Canadian society for years to come.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to add my voice to those of my distinguished colleagues in debating Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another act.

Within Bill C-6, among other things, the Liberal government is seeking to repeal legislation that would allow citizenship to be revoked from dual citizens who engage in certain acts against the national interest. The type of acts that would warrant someone's citizenship being removed are not loosely defined or a slippery slope, as my colleagues across the floor have implied. Instead, they are clearly defined and limited to convictions for terrorism, high

treason, treason or spying offences, depending on the sentence received, or for membership in an armed force or organized armed group engaged in armed conflict with Canada. In short, the removal of citizenship for dual nationals only applies to those who show an overwhelming hatred of Canada, Canadian values, and Canadian citizens.

As an immigrant myself and a member of Parliament for a constituency made up of Canadians with rich and various cultural backgrounds, I am deeply upset by the implication that removing citizenship from a convicted terrorist somehow constitutes creating a second tier of Canadian citizenship. My caucus colleagues and I, and Canadians from coast to coast to coast, know that there is only one class of Canadian citizens and that all Canadians deserve to be protected from acts of terror. To imply otherwise is an insult to anyone who takes pride in our rich cultural values and freedoms.

I find it deeply troubling that the priority for the Liberal government when it comes to immigration and public safety legislation is to give back citizenship and to protect the rights of Zakaria Amara. To give some context for why this is important, Zakaria Amara was found guilty in a court of law of plotting to murder thousands of innocent Canadians by bombing strategic locations throughout the greater Toronto area and other locations across our country. This man, by both his convictions and actions, showed his hatred for Canada and lack of respect for all those who value their citizenship, who invest in their communities, and call this great nation home.

An act of terror against one Canadian is an act of terror against all Canadians and all future Canadians. I know that my constituents and I feel that deeply. In light of this, I believe that the Liberal government owes Canadians a credible explanation for their decision to offer Canadian citizenship to convicted terrorists, especially while our allies, including the United Kingdom, France, Australia, and New Zealand, are taking steps to revoke the citizenship of convicted terrorists. Therefore, I ask, why should Canada be so far out of step with our peer countries?

There is nothing inevitable about Canada's future prosperity. The government has an obligation to introduce policies and legislation that live up to the high standards Canadians rightly expect. Under the previous Conservative government, Canada benefited from the highest level of sustained immigration in our history. I am proud to stand on this legacy as a member of Parliament.

● (1620)

I emigrated to Canada as a young man, and I can say with absolute conviction that I understand both the joys and challenges that come as part of transitioning to life in this great nation. It is with this understanding that I would like to speak to another part of Bill C-6, specifically the Liberal proposal to limit the requirement to demonstrate knowledge of Canada and one of the official languages for applicants between the ages of 18 and 54.

There is no debate about whether or not those with a low level of proficiency in either English or French outside this range can still contribute to Canadian society. We know that these individuals work hard, care for their families, and are involved in their communities. Yet, I would like to share my own experience as a young immigrant in Canada two decades ago.

When I arrived in Canada, I began working in a factory. At the time, I was shy and spoke very little English, and as a result I had to rely on those around me to help me communicate to both my co-workers and supervisors. One day, I needed help asking my supervisor for some nails to finish the project I was working on. The young man I asked for help responded by demanding that I buy him lunch first. In this way, I was made to purchase lunch for this young man every day just to keep my job. It is because of this experience that I do not support the Liberals' changes to the language requirements.

Learning one of the two official languages is a valuable tool that helps immigrants to successfully transition into their new lives in Canada. Furthermore, it ensures that they are not isolated from the larger Canadian communities, and allows them to both learn and share with others the rich experience and perspectives they bring with them.

In conclusion, my colleagues and I on both sides of the floor recognize the value of calling this great nation home. It is my hope that we can continue to work together to strengthen the integrity of our citizenship, safeguard the security of all Canadians, and enjoy unity within our diversity for generations to come.

• (1625)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be very clear that the changes in Bill C-24 passed by the Conservative government in 2014 turned millions of Canadians into second-class citizens with fewer rights than other Canadians. The changes were discriminatory, anti-immigrant, and un-Canadian. Bill C-6 would simply undo these changes.

No government should have the right to revoke citizenship, whether one is born in Canada or abroad.

Does the member opposite not agree that Bill C-6 simply restores equal citizenship in Canada to Canadians?

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, during the Conservative government's 10 years in power, it brought in the most immigrants to this country ever—a lot more than the Liberals. The new Canadians became citizens in this country.

When Chrétien was the prime minister, immigration went down to 142,000 a year. Last year alone, in 2015, we brought in 282,000 immigrants to the country. I am proud of this.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for sharing his personal story. It is a little confounding why he would not identify with the reunification of families. However, my question is actually about being equal in the eyes of the law. Does the member not agree that all Canadians are equal before the law?

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the statement that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. At the same time, a terrorist is a terrorist is a terrorist. I would not want to live next door to Zakaria

Government Orders

Amara, or anybody convicted for this sort of thing. We absolutely believe in the same system, with the exception of those people.

There is also another exception to the rule. If people commit fraud when filling out their immigration applications for Canada, they can also be removed with this new law.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech and for sharing his experience with us.

I was compelled by one particular part of what the hon. member spoke about, which is how as a new Canadian who could not speak the language, he was effectively held hostage by someone he worked with.

As we know, the bill speaks to the language requirements and increasing the age of those language requirements. I wonder if the hon. member could tell this House what other experiences the people he deals with in his community have had with respect to that issue.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, I will put it a couple of ways.

First, I probably have more people in my community than anyone else. I help people. Any time and every time that somebody comes my way, I am always helpful. It is unconditional. It does not matter where somebody lives.

With respect to the language issue, in the early days of my life in Canada, I could not speak the language. I was shy and I had a turban on my head. I came in the early days when it was, if I may say, an absolutely white Canada. I looked different. I could not speak the language. I could not buy a sandwich. My uncle, God bless his soul, forced me to learn English.

There were tons of Canadians with Irish backgrounds. I met one whose name was Toby Joyce. He was my next door neighbour. He made sure that I wrote two pages of English every single day. When he would come to see me, he would make me speak loudly, and he made me watch the news seven days a week. He said, "I want to hear five English words every single day from you." I am proud of Toby Joyce and the many others. God bless his soul.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. 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 Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Housing; the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona, The Environment.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to be able to speak about Bill C-6. The government is committed to a Canada that is both diverse and inclusive. Canadians know and our government recognizes that historically we are strong because of our diversity, not in spite of it. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship have been clear from the outset: flexibility and diversity are going to be crucial to our future as a country and in what we offer the world.

Government Orders

We want to encourage that diversity and take steps to ensure that the path to citizenship is a flexible and fair one, but also one that encourages all Canadians to take pride in being Canadian. Speaking to an audience at the Canadian High Commission in London shortly after taking office, the Prime Minister eloquently stated:

Compassion, acceptance, and trust; diversity and inclusion—these are the things that have made Canada strong and free. Not just in principle, but in practice.

Those of us who benefit from the many blessings of Canada's diversity need to be strong and confident custodians of its character.

It is a strong feeling of attachment to Canada, and to those values of compassion, acceptance, and trust that we cherish, that encourages citizens to be strong and confident custodians of our national character.

Those who criticize the measures in Bill C-6 will say that the greater flexibility that these changes bring will diminish the attachment to Canada and our shared values, creating so-called citizens of convenience.

To be Canadian is a privilege and an honour. Few among us would deny that. Far from decreasing the value of Canadian citizenship, the measures in this bill foster greater attachment to our country. Bill C-6 fits in with the government's goal of ensuring that immigrants succeed in life and reunite their families in Canada.

The Citizenship Act includes and will continue to include a number of measures that help strengthen attachment to Canada, deter citizenship of convenience, ensure program integrity, and combat fraud. All Canadians should be treated equally, whether they are born in Canada, are naturalized, or hold citizenship in another country.

As the Prime Minister has said, "A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian."

Critics will likely also point to changes to the age range for language proficiency and citizenship knowledge testing as another way that attachment to Canada will be lessened. We believe in the importance of having adequate knowledge of one of Canada's official languages and understanding the responsibilities and privileges associated with being a citizen of this country.

Adults aged 18 to 54 will still be required to provide evidence of their proficiency in English or French and to pass a citizenship test. However, the government understands that for younger and older applicants, this can be a barrier to citizenship. That is why Bill C-6 brings the age range for language and knowledge requirements back to 18 to 54. These changes will not put newcomers at a disadvantage.

Younger applicants will acquire knowledge of Canada and official language capability through schooling. Older adults applying for citizenship will find support to be knowledgeable about Canada and to speak its official languages through a wide variety of services offered across the country. This flexibility will help children, their parents, and their grandparents achieve citizenship, an important step that will allow immigrants to gain a deeper sense of belonging to our society and to become more active citizens.

● (1635)

To foster attachment to Canada, we are also allowing time spent residing in Canada before becoming a permanent resident to count toward citizenship requirements.

The Citizenship Act would be amended so that each day within the five years preceding the citizenship application that the applicant was physically present as a temporary resident or protected person before becoming a permanent resident would count as a half-day toward meeting the physical presence requirement for citizenship, up to a maximum of one year.

Furthermore, each day of physical presence in Canada as a permanent resident will be counted as one day of physical presence for the purpose of obtaining citizenship.

In other words, an applicant could accumulate up to 365 days as a temporary resident or protected person and the remaining 730 days as a permanent resident in order to accumulate the 1,095 days of physical presence required to become a Canadian citizen.

This acknowledges that post-secondary students who come to study in Canada choose to remain to pursue a career. If they do so, it is because they have developed an attachment to Canada, whether because of work, family, or opportunities. They have started to make a life for themselves in Canada, benefiting our society and the country as a whole.

We should acknowledge and reward them for choosing to make Canada their home. Their experience in Canada matters. Their choice to be here matters.

Once again, this is a matter of principle to our government. Canadians are proud of their country and our values. We welcome immigrants, and we help them settle, integrate, and succeed. That is our history, our present, and our future.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her defence of diversity and inclusion.

The fees associated with citizenship applications went up significantly under the Conservative regime, despite the poor service provided by the department.

I would have liked Bill C-6 to go even further. I have no doubt that my colleague has a great deal of compassion for the families who go through financial difficulties after they first arrive in Canada.

Does the member intend to ask the government to go even further with Bill C-6 and bring down these fees, which can easily surpass \$1,000 per family, as well as the other fees related to documentation?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

Of course, the issues of fees and funding related to newcomers are very important. That is why there are different programs to welcome newcomers.

The recent Syrian refugee program comes to mind. There has been some excellent collaboration between government services, the community, and the family members who are already here. Some important steps were taken to help these families get settled when they arrived in Canada, and I expect that that will remain our policy.

• (1640)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will briefly go over the previous question and provide a bit of commentary.

We need to recognize that Bill C-6 would do a number of things. There is one in particular that I would like to focus on, and that is that we are proposing to lower the number of years to qualify for citizenship. That is a strong and positive thing.

With respect to the member's question, there are a number of citizenship problems that the Liberal government has to deal with. One of those problems is legislation, and that is what Bill C-6 is all about. A former question was asking about fees.

Another issue is the processing time for citizenship. The previous government increased processing times to over two years from under one year, and this involved individuals who actually qualified to become citizens and then had to put in an application.

This government has recognized that some people here are students and visitors. They can count that time.

We also have a budget coming up, and we might see more things dealing with other aspects of citizenship.

Would the member not agree that this government is taking the issue of citizenship to heart, that we are doing what we can to improve the system, and this legislation is just one step?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question because it allows me to talk about my own immigration experience. Hold on, because it is not the same as the other stories we have heard here today.

My ancestors came from Ireland, as my grandmother liked to say, "before the famine". They were prescient and saw that something was coming and said, "We have to get out of here" and they came to Canada. Luckily for us, they survived and were welcomed with open arms on the shores of Quebec by Quebeckers, despite not speaking the same language. There was an openness and generosity of all the different cultures and religious groups. We know of political leaders who went down to the docks to help the Irish who were dying of typhoid and cholera at the time.

This was the kind of generosity that my ancestors found, and this is the kind of generosity that we have here today.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured and very pleased to stand in the House today in March of 2016 to speak to Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another act.

I want to start by congratulating the government on bringing forward this legislation. It is long overdue. It is thoughtful and very important to Canadians. It undoes what every thoughtful Canadian

Government Orders

and, more importantly, most new Canadians in the country regarded as regressive changes made to citizenship by the previous Conservative government.

I find that we often do not support each other enough across the aisle in the House when legislation or proposals are introduced that are helpful. We tend to criticize each other and find fault, but while the bill is not perfect—and I will speak to a few items that I hope the government would be open to amending—I want to congratulate it on tabling the legislation and say that the vast majority of Canadians will receive this legislation very well.

I want to talk about citizenship for a moment, broadly speaking. Citizenship is extremely important to Canadians. I do not think there is a person in the country who does not deeply value and profoundly treasure the fact that we are lucky enough to be Canadian citizens in this world. This citizenship is cherished not only by those fortunate enough to be born on Canadian soil but also equally by those who have come to Canada, who may have been born in another nation.

In my riding of Vancouver Kingsway I have one of the most multicultural ridings in Canada. We are home to one of the highest percentages of new Canadians of any riding in the country. Whether people came from Sri Lanka, India, the Philippines, China, or anywhere else in the world, when they reside in Vancouver Kingsway, and I would dare say in all of my colleagues' ridings in the country, they are incredibly proud of the citizenship they have been permitted to acquire in our country.

I must say as well that Canada does not have an unblemished record when it comes to citizenship. In fact, the record on citizenship in our country has been checkered with discrimination, racism, and sexism. Last week, I was fortunate enough to tour the Canadian Chinese military museum. I saw artifacts of soldiers of Chinese descent who fought in World War II. They were born in our country, fought for our country, and had certificates issued to them at birth that said they were not considered Canadian citizens because of their race.

Prior to 1947, children born to Canadian fathers and non-Canadian mothers were treated better and differently than children born to Canadian mothers and foreign-born fathers. There was gender discrimination in that as well.

Citizenship has long been precarious. In fairness, this applies equally to Liberal governments of the past as well as Conservative governments. For the Liberals, between 1947 and 1976, citizenship could be revoked for issues like treason or acts of war. Then of course the Conservatives brought in their infamous citizenship legislation that once again made citizenship precarious for Canadians, where it could be revoked for treason or terrorism. Both parties have introduced measures in the past that made citizenship revocable in our country, based on the medieval concept of banishment. That is something I am very happy to see the bill remove from the legislation.

Before I go further, there has been a litany of issues since 1947. There were problems with citizenship that still exist to this day that we need to address. The legislation goes a long way in addressing and fixing these problems.

Government Orders

Citizenship, of course, raises important considerations. What criteria ought to exist in order to acquire it? Are there any circumstances in which it is appropriate for a citizen, once granted citizenship, to lose it? These are important considerations that engage every member of the House. I will talk about this in a moment.

• (1645)

I want to talk about the legislation introduced by the previous Conservative government, which this legislation very properly attempts to fix. The Conservatives essentially made citizenship harder to acquire and easier to lose. They increased the language requirements for people coming here.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I hear “nonsense” coming from the Conservatives. They should read their own legislation. I will give them an example.

It used to be that someone coming to this country had to pass a language test if they were between the ages of 18 and 54. The Conservatives extended that and said that people wanting to get citizenship in this country would have to pass a language test between the ages of 14 and 17 and between the ages of 55 and 65, making it harder for young people and seniors, many of whom were the parents of their sponsors in this country, to acquire citizenship purely because they might not have been able to speak English or French. The Conservatives did that.

They made Canadians wait longer, in fact between four and six years after being a permanent resident to acquire citizenship. They made it easier to strip citizens of citizenship and, in fact, in some cases even without a hearing. The Conservatives created two tiers of citizens, where someone born in this country who had dual citizenship could be deported and stripped of their citizenship for committing a crime, but a Canadian who was born here and did not have dual citizenship could not. The result was two tiers of citizens.

The Conservatives brought in a medieval concept of banishment in which if someone committed a crime, albeit a very serious crime, the Conservatives' response, like that of a medieval king, was that “You're banished from the kingdom, away with you”, instead of the modern notion of a democratic state in which, if someone commits a serious crime, we deal with them in the justice system properly and not by taking away their citizenship.

The Conservatives increased the cost of citizenship, in some cases making it cost a family of four more than \$1,000 to apply for citizenship.

These were the Conservative notions of citizenship.

When listening to the former immigration minister in the House last night talk about things like democracy, I thought there is no government in Canada over the last decades that I can remember that did more to damage democracy in this country than the previous Conservative one. They prorogued Parliament to avoid votes they knew they would lose. Talk about disrespecting democracy. They brought in closure to limit debate in the House a record number of times, more than any other government in the history of Canada. They changed the Elections Act to restrict Canadians' access to

exercise their vote. Therefore, to hear the former minister of immigration lecture members on democracy was the height of irony. He talked about extremism. Again, in my lifetime of watching Parliament in this place, the Conservative government did more to foster extremism, division, and regional enmity than any other government in history.

I am really happy to see the current government make changes that I think restore the notion of citizenship that the vast majority of Canadians have come to cherish in this land.

I want to talk about what the bill does. It removes the ability to revoke citizenship on national interest grounds. I think that is important. If a Canadian citizen commits treason, or spies on Canada, or fights for a different armed forces across country, no Canadian and no member in this chamber would countenance that. The proper penalty for that, though, is to send them to a Canadian jail and make them pay their price to Canada, but do not strip their citizenship and create two tiers of citizens.

The bill also removes the obligation for a new citizen to declare their intent to reside in Canada. The former Conservative minister of immigration made a big deal out of that too. Canadians have the right to move and live where they want in this world. In the modern global world, that is what Canadians do.

The bill would restore the length of time that a permanent resident must actually be present in Canada. It restores the counting of pre-Canada time before someone is a permanent resident for the purpose of their acquiring citizenship. It removes the language and knowledge examinations and puts those back to between the ages of 18 and 55, as they should be.

This legislation is good because it respects citizenship and makes it easier for Canadians to acquire that citizenship they care so deeply about. It brings back fair process for Canadians. I am proud to stand in the House and congratulate the government for moving bill, and I will probably vote for this legislation.

• (1650)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague opposite on an eloquent recap of what is being presented in the bill. I had the honour to stand this morning and speak to one of the issues that I think is one of the best moves contained in the bill, and that is the renewal of half credit for international students who come to study at our world-class universities.

In the riding I have the honour to represent, I boast of two such universities, one of which, St. Thomas University, a small liberal arts leader, brings in hundreds of international students every year, who sometimes travel to Ottawa to see what is going on in Parliament above and beyond contributing to the broader community. Some of these students wish to stay in the community of Fredericton afterwards and continue to contribute to our socio-economic wealth. I see it as a huge benefit in a place like New Brunswick that has an aging population.

Could my colleague comment on the contribution that international students can make to the other coast of Canada?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I wholly concur with my hon. colleague's point in that regard.

Government Orders

I can give a real life example. One of my constituency assistants, Wei Qiao Zhang, came to our country as a student. His wife is actually doing a Ph.D. in law at UBC in her third language, by the way. He came here to do a degree in philosophy at the University of Toronto. When he came to apply for citizenship, the previous legislation would have allowed him to count the time he spent in the country, or a portion of it, prior to becoming a permanent resident toward the time allocation to become a Canadian citizen. The Conservatives brought in legislation that eliminated this time.

Here is a young man who made a commitment to this country, who had been in the country 10 years and who wanted to count part of that committed time toward his citizenship, but would not have been allowed to have done so by the Conservatives.

This legislation restores that balance, as it properly should do. It does give credit to those young people who are students who come to our country and decide to make a commitment.

That is another advantage of this legislation and I congratulate the government on restoring that.

• (1655)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, I very much enjoy listening to my colleague speak. He is one of the best speakers in the House and I hope to hear more from him over the next little while.

What does my hon. friend think the reception will be in his riding concerning the bill? Are there things his constituents will look for in terms of improvement as we get to committee stage, if we are lucky to get that far?

Mr. Don Davies: That is an excellent question, Mr. Speaker, and is high praise indeed coming from my hon. colleague from Burnaby South who is, I think, certainly one of the most eloquent speakers as well in the House.

The reception will be fantastic. I already know, through doing casework in my riding, how damaging and how worrying the previous Conservative legislation was to many people in our riding who wanted to get citizenship.

I think the member from Winnipeg commented earlier on the unbelievable length of time it had taken, under the Conservatives, for someone to acquire citizenship. People are waiting years. That means no Canadian passport. That means an individual is unable to vote in our country. I will be looking to see if the government can speed that up.

In terms of changes, there are problems with the bill that I would hope the government looks to amend. One of them is that the bill still gives the power to the minister to revoke citizenship, based on a paper review with no judicial hearing. There is still a prohibition on citizenship for people charged with a criminal offence abroad. Also, it still provides the minister the discretion to privately grant citizenship to individuals.

I hope the Liberal government would be open to reasoned amendments in this regard, to make a good bill even stronger.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated in the past, it is always a pleasure to

address the House on what I believe are important issues. Bill C-6 is a very important issue.

I spoke against Bill C-24, which was passed not long ago under the Conservative government. I felt fairly passionate about the fact that the government was taking the issue of citizenship in the wrong direction. Today we have a bill before us that would rectify a number of wrongs that the previous government put in place.

I want to pick up on the point of my colleague from the NDP. I appreciate his comments and support of this bill, recognizing the importance of citizenship and that we get it right. Citizenship is very important. It is something in which we have a vested interest. In the Liberal caucus, it is an issue about which we are all very passionate. We look to the current Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to be progressive in making the changes that are so badly needed to fix the system, and it goes beyond the legislation before us today.

A few weeks ago, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship addressed the House and made reference to the processing times for citizenship. It is a serious issue. It was not that long ago, a number of months, when the Conservatives allowed the processing of a citizenship to go far beyond two years. We should keep in perspective that this is after someone technically qualifies to get citizenship. He or she has to then put in an application requesting it. People are putting in their applications today and having to wait a minimum of two years. The actual percentage is a guesstimate, but it was closer to two and half or three years, and 15% plus were waiting four to six years, depending on whether they required their residency calculator to kick in while spot checks were being done. Those are unbelievable processing times.

The minister has been very straightforward and transparent in saying that the government wants to deal with this processing time. We recognize the desire of people who call Canada their home. They have taken interest in our great country, are productive while they are here, and contribute to our lifestyle in a very real and tangible way. We want them to take on the responsibility of being citizens, and they have a desire to become citizens. I was pleased when the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship said that we would be reducing the processing time.

Now we are debating a bill that is yet another step in the right direction to deal with citizenship. For example, the legislation would change what the Conservatives put in place, which was that in order to qualify to be citizens, people had to have lived in Canada for at least four years out of the most recent six. It used to be three out of five years. This legislation would bring it back to the way it was.

Government Orders

There was no demand to change it in the first place. I was the critic for immigration a number of years ago. I sat in committee and no one talked about it. Why the Conservative government made that decision is beyond me. In fact, a Conservative MP introduced a private member's bill to reduce the amount of time required for citizenship for individuals who chose to join the Canadian Forces. That member received a great deal of sympathy from members on all sides of the House. Therefore, I was somewhat taken aback when the government made this decision.

• (1700)

Another very smart move in the legislation is the recognition of the valuable contributions of people who come to Canada to work and to study. I believe Canadians are quite passionate about this. We recognize those valuable contributions made by individuals who make those sacrifices, often leaving family abroad to come to Canada, to get money, to get that job, to fill a void in the Canadian economy. We are talking about significant numbers of people.

As the immigration critic a few years back, I used to argue that if people were good enough to work in Canada, they were good enough to stay in Canada. There was overwhelming support for statements of that nature. There needs to be criteria, and the criteria will be there. I believe we will see more on that front.

However, the legislation recognizes those students and those workers. For example, someone who has been working in Canada for two years will be able to take one of those years and apply it to the three of five years. That is a progressive move recognizes the valuable contributions these workers have made.

When we look at the student component, these incredible young people have made a commitment to further their education in Canada. Why should we not allow them the opportunity to get their citizenship a little earlier? I would challenge the Conservatives to answer some of those questions about why they made those changes.

There was no demand. No one was coming to the table saying that we needed to make those changes. We have heard a great deal about the whole issue around terrorists, and why we would accept the two-tier system as proposed by the Conservatives proposed when in government.

Let there be no doubt. Under Bill C-24, the Conservatives created a two-tiered citizenship system. They said that if people had dual citizenships, they could lose their Canadian citizenship. If they did not have dual citizenship, then they could not.

I do not care what the official opposition benches say. The Conservatives created a two-tier system.

This legislation recognizes that a Canadian citizen is a Canadian citizen. All we need to do is look at the election results, because this issue was often referred to at the door. This bill would right a number of wrongs, as members of the Liberal Party and other parties have said.

This legislation is yet another step in what I believe is a move for real change, which the Prime Minister committed to during the last federal election. We are seeing those commitments materialized.

We believe that one of the greatest, if not the greatest, strengths we have in Canada is our diversity. If we capitalize on that diversity, Canada will continue to grow and prosper well into the future. There is so much potential here. We cannot underestimate the importance of immigration.

I was especially pleased when I heard the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship earlier today in question period. He made very positive statements about improving processing times for families and improving the number of immigrants. I believe I even heard him say that in 2016 Canada might receive the highest number of immigrants in its history.

We recognize that good, sound immigration policy that leads to citizenship and good citizens is the direction in which to take our country. We are a country of immigrants. Immigrants built our country. We need to have immigration to continue to prosper in the future. We in the Liberal Party recognize that and, as a government, we will put in sound policies to feed that growth. By feeding that growth, we will be building a healthier, stronger economy, and a better society for all of us.

• (1705)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member regarding situations where a minister may revoke somebody's citizenship. I realize this is still contained in the law. I understand that, if somebody has achieved citizenship through fraudulent means, that would be one circumstance. I am wondering if the member could give me an example of another circumstance, and why we need to keep this power in there at all.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I made some reference to putting in applications. It is important that we recognize, for people who want to immigrate to Canada, that there is an expectation that when they put in the application they are being honest on it. If in fact it is found out that they were not honest, there is a consequence to it. There will continue to be a consequence to those who intentionally provide misinformation that ultimately allows them to acquire their citizenship.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not mind raising this issue once again, about the importance of providing opportunities for international students who come to our communities to continue to help build these communities for years to come. Once again, I have many international students who arrive in the community of Fredericton who get involved on campus, get involved in the larger community, and can contribute so much to our entrepreneurial ecosystem in Fredericton and across New Brunswick.

I would ask my colleague to comment on what potential he sees through our reinstating the part-time credit available to international students, as we help build a diverse and prosperous country.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member for Fredericton is right on, and I noticed that he has been a very strong advocate on that particular issue. I appreciate the comments and the question.

Government Orders

He is quite right. When we look at the value that is brought to Canada through international students, we only need to look at virtually any campus in Canada and we will see first-hand everything from providing the cost of facilities or adding revenue to the facilities to supporting the academic excellence that we see in many of the post-secondary facilities across this land. Many of our post-secondary facilities need international students to be able to maintain the type of quality programming that is currently in place. We are very dependent on international students.

Instead of being in fear, we should be looking at ways that we can reward. This particular bill actually would reward those international students by saying that, if they come to Canada, study, and ultimately land in Canada, we are going to count some of those years they spend in universities as part of their time so that they would be able to qualify for their citizenship that much earlier. I see that as good news, and I truly appreciate the question.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a little disappointed to hear the hon. member make a defence of differential fees and say that the Canadian education system depends, for its funding, on extremely high differential fees as a proxy for not having enough funding from government, but that is for another day.

The question I would like to ask is this. A related issue that the former Conservative government dealt with was that it took away the right to vote in federal elections from Canadian citizens who have been out of the country for more than five years. We had people like actors and people working around the world who complained publicly that they could not vote because of that.

Will the member's government bring in legislation that would restore the ability for Canadian citizens to vote in Canadian elections, even if they have been out of the country for more than five years but they retain their Canadian citizenship? That is people like Donald Sutherland.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I believe that was the Fair Elections Act, which the previous government brought in.

We have a very ambitious electoral reform package, and we have a very competent and articulate minister who is open for ideas and thoughts. I would suggest, for the member, that he might want to share his concerns, as other members have done, in regard to the Elections Canada Act. I can assure the member that the minister is approaching it with an exceptionally open mind, looking for good ideas to make sure we have a democracy that is improved from the way it was when the previous government made changes that deprived some people of the opportunity to vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we resume, I just want to take a second here to say that normally members hear from the Speaker when there is something bad happening or something not going on, but I just want to compliment the members who were here this afternoon. It was very respectful, and the tone was very nice from up here, and so I thank all of you.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon in opposition to Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act.

Let me say at the outset that Canada is a country built upon immigrants. People come from all corners of the world, people of all backgrounds, ethnicities, faiths, and creeds. People come here to build a better life for themselves and their families, and as a result of their contribution, they help shape and build a better Canada each and every day.

Hundreds of thousands of new Canadians are welcomed into the Canadian family each and every year. Indeed, as a result of important reforms to Canada's immigration system brought forward by the previous Conservative government, a more than 70-year record number of new Canadians were welcomed into the Canadian family. I would say that is a record of which all Canadians can be proud.

Each time an immigrant is welcomed into the Canadian family as a Canadian citizen, we are all enriched by the ever-increasing diversity of Canada. It is precisely because of that, that I stand vigorously in opposition to Bill C-6.

Bill C-6 would do absolutely nothing to help the hundreds of thousands of good people who are waiting in the immigration line to build a new and better life in Canada. Rather, Bill C-6 would primarily help one individual, and that individual's name is Zakaria Amara.

Zakaria Amara is the ring leader of the Toronto 18. Yes, it is that Zakaria Amara. He is someone who built detonators, acquired explosives to build truck bombs to blow up downtown Toronto, and was responsible for a plot that the trial judge characterized as "spine chilling". What is more, the trial judge determined that, but for the fact that Amara was stopped in his tracks, this plot would have resulted in loss of life on a scale never before seen in Canada, if it had been carried out.

Amara's citizenship was rightly revoked under the previous Conservative government, and now, if Bill C-6 were passed, Amara's citizenship would be reinstated. Effectively, Bill C-6 would put Amara at the front of the immigration line, ahead of the hundreds of thousands of law-abiding people who want to join the Canadian family.

I agree with the hon. members opposite when they say that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. I would add that a law-abiding Canadian is a law-abiding Canadian is a law-abiding Canadian. Also, a terrorist is a terrorist is a terrorist.

However, Bill C-6 would do nothing to create equality or treat newcomers equally. I can see that the government's bill may be well intentioned, but what Bill C-6 would effectively do is give dual citizens convicted of terrorist offences preferred status over other dual citizens.

What happens to dual citizens who conceal their criminal record? The answer is that their citizenship may be revoked, and the government supports that.

• (1715)

What happens to dual citizens who enter Canada on fraudulent pretenses? The answer is that their citizenship may be revoked, and this government supports that.

Government Orders

However, what happens to dual citizens who are convicted of terrorist offences? If Bill C-6 were passed, they would be able to keep their Canadian citizenship.

How can that be? How is that fair? How is that just? How is that fair to, frankly, multi-generation Canadians, to first-generation Canadians, to new Canadians, or to any Canadian?

It is not fair. It is fundamentally unjust, particularly to dual-citizenship Canadians. Not only is it fundamentally unjust to dual-citizenship Canadians, but it is out of step with literally every other country in the western world. Almost all countries in the western world have laws on their books that take away the citizenship of those who perpetrate terrorist acts.

It is out of step with literally every democracy in the western world, because Bill C-6 is inconsistent with the principles that underlie citizenship; namely, reciprocity. Canada is loyal to the citizen; the citizen is loyal to Canada.

Let me just say that I hope the government takes a step back and reconsiders this ill-advised piece of legislation. Rather than moving forward with this legislation, I would encourage it to work with us, work with all parties, work with all Canadians to find ways to help streamline the immigration process; to find ways to give immigrants the tools they need so that they can prosper here in Canada; and to, frankly, work to help every new Canadian enjoy the Canadian dream by creating conditions for long-term growth and prosperity, instead of the reckless tax-and-spend schemes it has brought forward over the last six months, which are slowing economic growth, including that of new Canadians, making us all poorer, and burdening future generations of Canadians with mountains of debt, including future generations of new Canadians.

In closing, let me say that a bill that would put terrorists ahead of dual-citizenship Canadians, a bill that would be inconsistent with long-standing principles respecting citizenship, a bill that would put one of the worst terrorists, Zakaria Amara, at the front of the immigration line, is a bill that must be defeated.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech. I also want to thank him for what he said in his introduction about welcoming immigrants. He also supports welcoming immigrants, so that fits in with what our party is advocating.

However, a leopard does not change its spots. My colleague is trying to frighten Canadians by talking about terrorism and other such things.

He also mentioned that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. Can he please explain how he can say that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian and, in the same breath, that he is in favour of dual citizenship?

[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, when people commit terrorist acts, when people seek to kill other Canadians, when people seek to destroy the institutions that bind us as Canadians, those individuals, as a matter of fact, renounce their citizenship.

What the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act did was merely affirm that fact.

What Bill C-6 does is seek to revoke the renunciation and reinstate it solely to the benefit of terrorists. We think that is fundamentally wrong, and it is why we do not support Bill C-6.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the passion with which my colleague speaks. It adds greatly to this debate.

My colleague has been vigorously defending Bill C-24, and I get a sense from the questions and the speeches that perhaps it did not go far enough for him.

Can he envision a bill that is stronger than Bill C-24 that he would perhaps like to see replace Bill C-6?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-6 falls short in just about every way imaginable.

Take, for example, the fact that under the Strengthening of Canadian Citizenship Act, we recognized that new Canadian applicants in an increasingly globalized world needed flexibility. In terms of the period of time that applicants were required to remain in Canada, the Strengthening of Canadian Citizenship Act gave them one third of the time that they could be outside of Canada. The Liberals now want to take away that flexibility, by reducing that to only 25% of the time that applicants can be outside of Canada.

This legislation would be bad for new Canadians. The only beneficiaries of it would be terrorists.

• (1725)

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite mentioned in his speech that this legislation would do nothing to help the long line of immigrants waiting to become citizens. Bill C-6 proposes to reduce the number of days needed for international students by reinstating 50% of their time here credit. It would also reduce the time that they are in Canada, from four out of six years to three out of five years in order to apply as citizens.

Would my friend agree that these measures would help those who want to become citizens and reduce the waiting time?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, there are some positive aspects of Bill C-6. I will admit that not all aspects of the bill are bad. We need to look at the changes carefully.

Unfortunately, there are too many provisions in Bill C-6 that are problematic, so barring the legislation being drastically amended, I and my colleagues in the Conservative Party cannot support it.

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today in support of Bill C-6. The bill will restore the fundamental principle of equality of citizenship, and also restore common sense to the process of becoming a Canadian citizen.

Government Orders

There are few privileges on earth greater than being a citizen of Canada. In our country, we cherish our freedom, our democracy, and our inalienable rights that attach to our citizenship. Canada has long been a beacon of hope and opportunity to many around the world. Our country is blessed to have been enriched by people who have become Canadians by choice.

In my riding of West Nova, we have an incredible history which started the foundation of the country, with rich contributions from Acadian, Mi'kmaq, Métis, British, and African Canadians. Also, we know that through many generations at Pier 21 in Halifax, many more immigrants began their lives as Canadians and together helped build this great country.

The most fundamental principle of the rule of law is that all citizens are equal before the law. We cannot have two classes of Canadians. Once someone is a citizen of our country, certain rights and privileges attach to that. They cannot be taken away. Bill C-6 restores the fundamental principle of our system of citizenship. It rightly seeks to reinstate this principle, which was taken away under the Conservatives' Bill C-24 in the last Parliament.

I have heard all kinds of claims by the opposition members in the debate so far on Bill C-6. However, the most intellectually frustrating argument I have heard is their claim that Bill C-6 leaves in the law the ability for revocation of citizenship in some cases. Therefore, the argument we are making on this side of the House, that it is fundamental that we cannot revoke citizenship, is somehow inconsistent with leaving that provision in the law. I have heard this from the other side. The argument has been made that Bill C-6 in fact creates two tiers of citizens. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the opposite is true. The bill remedies the fact that in Bill C-24 there are two classes of citizenship.

Does the opposition not see the obvious difference between taking away citizenship from someone who never would have or should have obtained citizenship but for fraud or misrepresentation, and revoking the citizenship of an otherwise valid citizen for egregious behaviour done after they have been conferred with all rights and privileges that come with citizenship? To my mind, there is a clear distinction between something being void *ab initio*, that meaning from the beginning. They were never citizens. That is the difference between something void *ab initio* and something voidable in the future for future behaviour.

Furthermore, do they not see that maintaining the integrity of our citizenship application process requires a mechanism to prevent those who would lie in order to become a citizen? What kind of system is reliable if there is no mechanism to withdraw from it people who have lied, committed fraud, or misrepresented the statements made in order to obtain the thing conferred upon them? Of course, to have a proper system of citizenship requires a mechanism for those people who have misrepresented themselves to the government to obtain the citizenship to take that away.

That is vastly different from saying that someone should have their citizenship revoked for something done after they have become a citizen. There is no causal link. There is nothing between their bad behaviour afterwards and their citizenship. Therefore, it is fundamentally wrong to suggest that because there are provisions that remain in the law to revoke citizenship for someone who should

never and would never have been conferred citizenship, versus someone revoking their citizenship for egregious behaviour after the fact, that the law is flawed

• (1730)

Let me be clear about this. There is no question that the behaviour associated with revoking citizenship in Bill C-24 is egregious behaviour. It is intolerable. It is criminal. It is repugnant. That is exactly why the criminal law in this country, to the fullest extent, should make sure that those people go to jail. That is where they belong. It should not be used as a punishment to revoke their citizenship because it does in fact create two tiers of citizens. It creates citizens who have dual citizenship who could be subjected to having their citizenship revoked on future behaviour, versus those who are Canadian and only Canadian citizens.

There is a big fundamental difference. A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. I know that line has been used on both sides of the House, but it is true. It is true that if we go down the road of having more than one class of citizenship, it will render less valuable the fact that someone is a Canadian citizen.

Being a dual citizen means that an individual is a Canadian citizen. However, a Canadian citizen is the same, whether or not they have more than one passport.

I submit that most Canadians understand this obvious difference. It is unfortunate that it is being advanced as a proper argument to maintain these elements from the previous Bill C-24. I note that these elements were part of the election campaign, and Canadians rejected those ideas in the last election.

Bill C-6 also reduces the length of time that someone must be physically present in Canada to qualify for citizenship. This would help immigrants achieve citizenship more quickly and change the requirements to three years within five years total. It will mean that applicants can apply one year sooner in order to join the citizenship of this country. This offers greater flexibility for immigrants who travel outside of Canada but maintain the timelines. It does ensure that a new Canadian has significant ties and links with our country to be a full and proud Canadian.

Another element of Bill C-6 that I find very good is the part of the bill that restores the 50% credit, for international students in particular, who spend time at one of our amazing schools in this country. It does not make any sense to take away the credit for those individuals whom we hope to attract, for whom we are competing with other countries around the world to have them live in Canada, to participate in our country. It does not make any sense at all to make it harder for them. We are competing with other countries around the world to attract the best and brightest, and we must do what we can to ensure that they stay here.

They have links with Canada. They obviously have a linguistic connection, either English or French, or perhaps both, in order to attend one of our universities or post-secondary schools. Therefore, it makes sense with those links, those connections, their intelligence and innovation, that we should be attracting and doing everything we can to encourage these students to become part of the Canadian family.

Government Orders

We know that Bill C-6 also amends the age range for the language requirement. Bill C-6 proposes to amend the age range for those required to meet language and knowledge requirements from 14 to 64, to those aged 18 to 54, removing a potential barrier to citizenship for applicants in both the younger and older age groups.

All Canadians are free to move outside of Canada, of course, and this is a right guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Many Canadians enjoy that privilege and maintain their strong ties and connections and pride in Canada. It is right and correct that Bill C-6 repeals the June 2015 change that required adult applicants to declare that they intend to continue to reside in Canada. This is a prime example of previous modifications to our law that treat certain citizens differently.

Bill C-6 attempts to remedy changes that were made that are against the rule of law, against the best traditions of this country, and that is why I will proudly support Bill C-6.

● (1735)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my hon. colleague's statements. I have been in the House most of the day and have listened to the debate over the last several days. He talked specifically about intellectual arguments on why this bill is not being supported on this side.

I would suggest that we are talking about a very narrow band as it relates to the revocation of citizenship. Since Confederation, there have been eight cases, and just six since World War II. There are 52 countries that recognize how important this issue is, and those 52 countries actually revoke citizenship for circumstances similar to this.

I would like to hear an intellectual argument from the other side as to why Liberals are proposing that those who commit terrorist acts, acts of treason, and espionage in this country should not lose their citizenship when those in 52 other countries around the world do.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that this is a matter of principle. This is a matter that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, and having a system whereby there are different types of Canadians is an affront to what we hold dear as Canadian values.

I note my friend referenced 52 countries around the world. One that he will not find on that list is the United States of America. That country has a law and a body of jurisprudence similar to what we have in our country when it comes to citizenship, and it is in the best traditions of both the United States and Canada that we stand proudly when we say that there is one type of citizenship. A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, and I reject entirely the premise that because another country has it in its laws, so should we.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again I would like to congratulate the member on his speech, but I would also like to put to him a question that may enlarge on the issue of citizenship.

I would remind him that something the Conservatives did, albeit in another piece of legislation in the last Parliament, was strip Canadian citizens who have lived outside the country for more than five years of their right to vote. Members may remember that actor Donald Sutherland and others publicly complained about this. These are people whose careers take them outside of the country, but they

have no less of a connection. In fact, there are Canadian diplomats who live outside the country for more than five years who could potentially lose their right to vote.

I am wondering how the member feels about that. Would he agree with me that another useful amendment would be to repeal that piece of legislation by the previous government and restore the right of all Canadian citizens to vote in Canadian elections, even if they have resided outside the country for more than five years?

● (1740)

Mr. Colin Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the thoughtful question and suggestion from the member opposite. I certainly remember that issue being raised during the election campaign and I know that it affected many who wish to participate in our democracy and have significant links and ties to our country. I find it unfortunate that the right of those Canadians to vote was taken away by that measure.

It is obviously not part of this bill. It is certainly something that I believe we should look at. I would be happy to work with my colleague in bringing that forward, either as an amendment or perhaps in a different fashion. I know that it is tied directly to our election laws in this country. It is an excellent suggestion.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder what his experiences in the election campaign were like and what he thinks about the hundreds of thousands of Canadians with dual citizenship who will be affected by Bill C-24.

I talked to Americans, people from Europe, and a lot of people from the Middle East in my riding who felt, to be honest, let down by the government. They wonder why they are a different class of citizen than Canadians born here. They think this bill only affects one person, but it does not. It affects millions of Canadians who have dual citizenship, and they feel slighted by this act.

When I knocked on doors during the election campaign, I heard many people say that they could not believe a government would do this to its own citizens. I wonder if his experiences were similar in his riding during the election campaign.

Mr. Colin Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I agree that many dual citizens were gravely concerned about how this might impact them personally. It is important to remind everyone in this debate that dual citizens may be people who were born in this country and became, by birth, dual nationals, both Canadian citizens and citizens of some other country. The law as it stands now would actually mean that such a person could have his or her citizenship revoked for an egregious set of circumstances, as mentioned earlier, while having never lived anywhere else but Canada.

Therefore, yes, people were concerned about this issue in the election campaign, but, as I said, it is a matter of principle, and to say that it only affects a few who may actually get caught up by this provision makes no difference. It is a matter of principle. We should stand up for the values we believe in in Canada. I believe Bill C-6 is a good measure to do that.

Government Orders

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-6 and to its provisions that would help provide greater flexibility for applicants trying to meet the requirements for citizenship and help immigrants obtain citizenship faster.

Bill C-6 proposes to help those Canadians who desire to work for companies that require travel as a part of their job description. I am sure the House would agree that in this ever-changing economic climate, it is essential for us to help those who reside in Canada and who want to become Canadians. As Canadians, we desperately need them to join us. That new generation of immigrants can continue to help build our country so it may remain one of the best places to live in the world.

We must also allow our people to be gainfully employed. I have had several people in my riding who are frustrated with not being able to work for companies that require them to travel and still have the ability to become citizens of our country, which would help them build a successful life in Canada. I am sure we can all recall situations where people have come to our riding offices wanting to work for these companies, wanting to be employed, and wanting to be Canadian citizens. We must help them.

Under the renewal process in place now, it takes a lengthy time for people to renew their PR cards that allow them to travel around the world. We want to encourage diversity and take steps to ensure that the path to citizenship is flexible and fair. However, we also want to encourage Canadians to take pride in obtaining their citizenship.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship have been clear from the outset. Flexibility and diversity is crucial to our future as a country and in what we offer the world. We know from decades of experience that immigrants who become Canadian citizens are likely to achieve greater economic success in our country and make a greater contribution to the Canadian economy. This commitment benefits the country as a whole. Furthermore, one significant predictor for a successful integration into Canadian life is achieving Canadian citizenship.

During debate on this very issue yesterday, a member from the Conservative Party stated that in order for one to value his or her citizenship, it should be difficult and take a long time to obtain citizenship. I highly disagree with that. In fact, it took my parents less time to get their citizenship when they arrived in this fine country in the late 1970s. I do not know of people who could be prouder to have chosen this country to make it their home. They have contributed greatly and have worked extremely hard to make their lives and the lives of their children a success here.

I have a senior in my riding who helped me with my campaign. I have never met a prouder man. He came to Canada as a senior with little knowledge of the English language or Canadian history. However, he always reminded me of how honoured we should all feel to be involved in the democratic process. He always made sure my office had a Canadian flag. He also insisted that I wear a Canadian pin on my jacket when campaigning. At events, he reminded me to play the national anthem. He stood proudly as he attempted to sing the words. This is a person who never had to take the test because he was above the age that required him to do so. Does it seem as if this individual does not value his citizenship? I

think not. If anything, at times people who are born here and have never lived anywhere else can end up taking their citizenship for granted.

Bill C-6 provides for a flexibility that benefits both the lives of new Canadians and the social cohesion of our diverse country. The first way it would do this is by amending the physical presence requirement to the equivalent of three years out of five. More specific, the proposed changes would reduce physical presence requirements to three years out of five immediately before the date of application. This is a change from the current four years out of six. This would allow individuals to apply for citizenship one year earlier than under the requirements that came into force in May of 2015, making the path to citizenship a shorter one.

● (1745)

The five-year window in which to accumulate three years, or more specifically, 1,095 days, of physical presence would also provide greater flexibility for those who are absent from Canada during the five-year qualifying period, for work or other personal reasons.

I have had many people in my office, whom I have met over the last few months, who have sick parents in their country of origin, who have to travel in order to take care of loved ones. Should we not grant these people the ability to do so in these extenuating circumstances, but also the ability to come back and gain citizenship quite quickly?

There are people who are selling their homes and wrapping up loose ends, who have moved to this country because their children have enrolled in school or for other reasons. They need to be able to wrap up their old prior business and still be able to come back to this country and move on with their lives in a successful way.

This bill supports the Government of Canada's goal that I spoke of earlier, the goal of increasing flexibility and making it easier for immigrants to build a successful life in Canada, reunite their families, and contribute to the economic success of all Canadians. In a world where individuals are more mobile than ever before, where employers increasingly have an international presence, it is crucial that we build flexibility into our immigration system.

As well, permanent residents who choose to study abroad, do voluntary work in other countries, or work for NGOs abroad would be able to, provided they are physically present for three years within the five-year window. They would be able to then bring this rich, international experience back to Canada, benefiting us all.

Similarly, Bill C-6 also proposes to repeal the supplemental physical-presence requirement that citizenship applicants be physically present in Canada for a minimum of 183 days of each of the four calendar years within the six years before the date of application.

Government Orders

Keeping this requirement would not allow applicants to fully benefit from the shorter physical presence or the increased flexibility that I just described, or the new non-permanent resident time credit that Bill C-6 also proposes. Removing this requirement would also provide more flexibility for prospective applicants to meet the requirements of citizenship.

Another way Bill C-6 would increase flexibility is through the removal of the intent-to-reside provision. Under current law, applicants are expected to have an intention to continue to reside in Canada if granted citizenship. Applicants are required to hold this intention from the time they submit their application to the time they take the oath of citizenship.

The provision created concern among some new citizens, who feared their citizenship could be revoked in the future if they moved outside of Canada. For example, although the period covered by the intent-to-reside provision does not apply after a person has become a citizen, it has created great confusion.

Some new Canadians whose work requires them to live abroad for extended periods may feel that their declaration of an intent to reside in Canada could negatively affect their ability to work abroad as Canadians.

The government has made a commitment to repeal the provision. Doing so, and making it clear that no citizens are bound by it, would eliminate any misperception that new Canadians would have.

We want our immigration system to be flexible to the needs of those who make Canada their home. More broadly, the changes proposed by Bill C-6 support the Government of Canada's commitment to fostering a diverse, fair, and inclusive country.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to speak in favour of Bill C-6 today. I encourage all my honourable colleagues to support the bill, as I will.

• (1750)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brampton North for her comments and her articulation of the important facets of this legislation.

I know the member as a passionate advocate for immigrants and the economic outcomes for newcomers and new, hard-working Canadians.

I want to ask the member for Brampton North if she could articulate to this House, from her perspective and her perception, how facilitating pathways to citizenship and facilitating integration of new Canadians would actually help improve some of those economic outcomes for our new Canadians.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, as I just outlined in my speech, people who know they have a good chance for citizenship are more likely to invest in our country. They are more likely to wrap up their ties in the nation they left behind and bring their money and investment to our country here. This improves our economic stability here and the stability of their families here and abroad. They have security knowing that their children will one day become citizens, and it allows them to make long-term plans for their future in this country. That is exactly what we want. We want the people who

come to our great nation to feel a part of the fabric of our society and to make Canada a home, and to ensure that they are proud to be Canadian, as they will be if granted citizenship in a fair and quick process.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's speech, particularly the story of her family's arrival in Canada.

This morning, in my speech on Bill C-6, I said that I have tremendous admiration for parliamentarians from all walks of life. Here in the House, we have more opportunities to meet people than we do in my riding, which is in a part of Quebec where there are fewer people from many different cultures.

My colleague said a lot about the importance of immigration and inviting people to Canada. She did not, however, say anything about terrorists.

When her parents came to this country, they intended to live here, to participate in and contribute fully to Canadian society, and they should be very proud that their daughter is now sitting in Canada's Parliament.

That is not at all the same as what the government wants to do with Bill C-6. It would restore citizenship to people who do not share these values and have no desire for their children to do something like become a member of Canada's Parliament.

Can my colleague comment on that situation, on that change of heart? When people want to come to Canada, they want to be Canadian; they do not want to destroy this country.

• (1755)

[English]

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, the member's question is a very important one that has been raised in the House several times since yesterday. Terrorism is a grave crime and should be treated as such. I do not believe any member has stood and said that terrorism should not be taken seriously.

I also feel that terrorism should be taken extremely seriously. However, as we talk about Canadian values we must not forget that one of our Canadian values is equality before the law. As we have stated many times, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. We cannot treat some sets of Canadians differently from other sets of Canadians.

We have to ensure that we have a justice system that we are proud of. Our Canadian justice system is quite well equipped to handle these situations. The previous bill before talked about terrorism, people who were convicted in a Canadian courtroom for a certain duration of time. These people will be dealt with by the harshest penalties of the law of Canada, and that is how they should be dealt with.

I do not believe it is necessary to create this two-tier system where we treat one Canadian differently from another Canadian. We can still accomplish the goal of fighting terrorism without the outrageous law that currently stands.

Government Orders

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this has been a great debate today. I have enjoyed listening to both sides of the House, where there seems to be quite a polarity between the Liberals and Conservatives, but the debate nonetheless has helped me reflect on the idea of what a citizen actually is and what is citizenship.

It is a very ancient concept, perhaps developed by the Israelites, but really made famous by the Greeks who expanded the idea of what a citizen is. It used to be that we organized ourselves. Humans were not very mobile and we lived in the same spots most of the time. We organized ourselves first by family and then by clan. Whom we were loyal to and whom we conceived ourselves to be was really the people in our immediate area.

However, once society started to expand and urbanize, which the Greeks were a great example of, all of a sudden it brought us into contact with different people who were not from our family groups, not from our clans. What developed as a result was the idea that we are something outside of ourselves. We could conceive of the idea that it was not just about us and our families, that not only could we co-exist with other groups, but we could believe in this broader group as something bigger than ourselves. That is really where the idea of citizenship began, as we began to think of ourselves as a group beyond our family members.

Along with that came the idea of defining what a citizen is. The safest way in ancient societies was to give citizenship to the most powerful people to make sure that males who were born in a particular area were given exclusive rights to citizenship and no one else. That eliminated women, slaves, and visitors from other places, so it was a very exclusive domain, this idea of who a citizen was.

What was important about that aspect of citizenship was that Greek males started to travel. Citizenship was important because they would be Greek citizens regardless of where they were in the world. Once people started to gather in urban areas and started to travel and explore, the idea of citizenship became even more important. A Greek male who travelled far away could always think in his head that he was a citizen of Greece. That was something beyond himself. It is not that he was a member of a particular family, but a citizen of Greece, and that was something important to him. It is something he would defend and try to contribute to.

We are in a parliamentary assembly now. The Greeks were famous for their parliamentary assemblies. Indeed, they not only expanded the idea of citizenship, but also started the first democracies. That is where they would debate who a citizen was, who would be included, who would be excluded, which is what we are doing here today. We are talking about what a Canadian citizen is.

Often we are caught up here with our partisan hats on, thinking about how this would benefit our own party and other parties, but I would really like us to pause and think about what we are doing here in this debate and will be doing at committee when the bill is passed. We will be having the same discussion that has been had in other assemblies. It will be about what a citizen is and how we define who we are. That will in turn will show the rest of the world how we think of ourselves and what kind of example we are providing to other people. This is a very important debate we are having because it sets the tone of how Canada is perceived worldwide.

Citizenship is actually codified by rules that give us privileges and responsibilities, but also gives us a sense of ourselves that is outside of our normal day-to-day living. We are all proud to be Canadians here, and I think a lot of people in the world would like to be Canadian, whereas others are very proud of their own nationality and will retain it. Furthermore, in some situations in Canada, we do not make people trade in their other identity, but allow them to become dual citizens. That is how our country works and it has worked very well. It is not the same in all countries. Some countries make people revoke their citizenship from another country.

• (1800)

What it really says is that Canada is an open place where one can come from afar, go through the rules, and become a citizen without having to jettison one's other identity. I think that is what makes Canada very strong.

My riding of Burnaby South, I would say, is one of the most diverse communities in the entire world, with over 100 languages. Most folks are from afar. We have a core group of folks of European descent who have been in Burnaby for 100 years or so, and now we have citizens from all over the world and a large population of refugees. They have come to Canada and are trying to move their conception of who they are to who they are going to be.

This is why we have to make sure that we get it right here and make it clear what it means to be Canadian. It is also why I so disagreed with the debates we had in the last Parliament, because they all came down to a very small part of what being a citizen is. It is important how we deal with people who are terrorists, but the focus on that clouded the idea of what citizenship is in Canada. I think what we need to do in this debate is clarify for both new and old Canadians what citizenship means to us.

Everyone thought Canadian citizens were equal, but then all of a sudden we had this whole discussion of whether or not citizenship was two-tiered, and whether someone could have their citizenship removed, which seems like an alien concept for people. If one is a citizen, either one has been born here to Canadian parents or one has moved here from another country and has gone through a series of very rigorous steps to gain citizenship. The state is totally in control of that process. The very apt government officials at Citizenship and Immigration Canada move recent immigrants to become permanent residents and then citizens, and these people are put through rigorous screens.

However, I have not really been getting an answer from the Liberals why they have retained in Bill C-6 the idea that a minister can revoke someone's citizenship without any kind of judicial review. I asked the parliament secretary that. If someone gains citizenship through fraudulent means, then their citizenship can be revoked, but I think that represents a failure on our part. If we fail to screen people properly and they gain citizenship by fraudulent means, that is a failure on our part, and I do not really count that person as having been a citizen to begin with.

Government Orders

If we move aside someone who has received citizenship fraudulently, under what other circumstances would we ever remove someone else's citizenship? Why does the minister need this power to remove someone's citizenship without judicial review? I have yet to hear an answer from the other side to that question. I am hoping that maybe in the question and answer period we can have a response from the other side as to why that is the case.

I think the effect is that it is still unclear as to how our citizenship is protected by law. For every other case of law-breaking in the country, we have to go through a proper judicial process protected by the charter. All Canadians feel confident in that. However, to me, this clouds the idea of what a citizen is and leaves a shadow of doubt as to whether citizenship is protected.

I have to say that I am glad that the new Liberal government has decided to allow graduate students here to speed up their application to become citizens. I know the U.S. is moving in that direction as well, and I am deeply worried that we will lose very talented students because we have restrictions on their becoming Canadian citizens.

This is something I am very proud to support and will be voting in support of the bill.

• (1805)

However, I am hoping that as we get to committee, we will try to clarify this whole issue of why the minister can revoke citizenship without judicial review.

I see that I am out of time.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my thanks to my colleague for his well-received speech in this House.

I took some time to go through the Criminal Code of Canada, specifically section 83. It is a very lengthy part of the Criminal Code. For those who are not aware, that is the section that deals with terrorism. It defines every aspect of terrorism: participating in it, supporting it, and financing it. However, that is not the point I want to get to. The point is that terrorism is defined under the Criminal Code. It is a crime, and I want to instruct my Conservative friends in the House that it is a crime.

Now, if I, as a natural-born Canadian, or any of my natural-born Canadian friends, were to engage in terrorist activities, we would go to jail. I have heard suggestions in this House that the bill would somehow let terrorists off the hook. The punishment for terrorism is usually 25 years to life. It is not an easy sentence.

When we look at the bill, we have to remember that terrorism is a crime and should be treated as such. I would like my friend from Burnaby to extrapolate on that point and maybe give some instruction to our Conservative colleagues in this House.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I totally agree that in Canada we have a responsibility to deal with terrorism and not just export it to other places. The strictest punishments under the Criminal Code apply to terrorism, and I think that revoking citizenship, in a way, would not do as much as if we were to put people in jail for terrorism. We have ample controls to deal with that.

I welcome debate from both sides. I think it is always important to hear what the Liberals and Conservatives have to say, even though the NDP, of course, is always right.

• (1810)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in following the dialogue that has been going on about the fact that we have laws in Canada against terrorism, which obviously is a very good thing, that has been a large portion of the argument today. My question is around that.

There are 57-some other countries, I believe my colleague mentioned, which have concerns about terrorism. They remove citizenship with respect to that specifically. I wonder if any research has been done on why that would be the case, when I am fairly confident, even though I am not a lawyer, that they would have laws with respect to terrorism in their country as well.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, terrorists should go to jail. That is it.

We are a very well-resourced country. We have excellent public servants who look after our penal system. When somebody commits a terrorist act and through the courts they are found to be guilty, they should go to jail. That should be that.

In a way, I think that removing citizenship is a side debate. It is something to distract us. I think that catching terrorists, ensuring we have intelligence to do that, ensuring we have fair process, due process under law to put people in jail and keep them there, keeps them from doing harm to other countries. We have a global responsibility to do that in Canada.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn the debate to another aspect of the bill, which is the language and knowledge requirements. I think there are reasons for a difference of opinion on this.

I keep thinking of my Hungarian grandmother, Mary Varyu, who came to this country in 1926. In her life, she never fully mastered English. She never could fully speak the language, or read. I have serious doubts as to whether today she would be able to pass a written knowledge test in English or French. Yet, there was no prouder Canadian than I have ever met than my little 4-foot, eleven-inch Hungarian grandmother, who proudly voted in every election, who paid her taxes on the button, who did not ever break a law, and who was an outstanding member of her community.

I know that the legislation would improve this by restoring the language and knowledge requirements to between the ages of 18 and 55, leaving people over and under those ages able to get citizenship without passing that test.

I wonder whether my hon. colleague would comment on the issue of language and knowledge and its role in citizenship.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, language should never be an unfair barrier to participation in political life. The 1965 Voting Rights Act in the U.S. was all about that. Language tests were put in before one could be registered to vote there. The Supreme Court struck that down. I think that is the case here.

Adjournment Proceedings

I do not understand. If people consider themselves to be Canadian but the government does not provide enough resources to allow them to become fully fluent in either language, then I do not see why that should be any kind of barrier to full citizenship. As my hon. colleague said, an individual can contribute even if that individual's language skills are not as good as those of others.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1815)

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to subsection 45(5), I request that the division be deferred until Monday, March 21, at the end of the ordinary hour for daily adjournment.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly the recorded division is deferred until Monday, March 21, at the ordinary hour of adjournment.

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you would find consent to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on December 11, 2015, I asked the minister whether the government planned to reinvest in social housing and renew the long-term subsidy agreements that were set to expire on December 31. I would like to point out that this matter was urgent three months ago.

In Canada, over 620,000 social housing units, including 127,000 in Quebec, were provided through long-term agreements between the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and community-based housing providers. The federal government has been granting subsidies to thousands of low-income families through these agreements for nearly 30 years.

Unfortunately, now that the subsidy agreements have expired, 5,200 families in Quebec have to pay nearly all of their housing costs. Their share of the rent represents up to 88% of their income, which is three times more than before. Eighty-eight per cent. That is unbelievable. How can a family buy groceries and pay other expenses with so little disposable income? In 2016, no one should have to choose between paying rent and buying groceries. These rent subsidies mainly helped seniors, families, and people with disabilities. The expiry of these agreements therefore affects the most vulnerable members of our communities. Having a roof over your head is the basis for everything. It keeps people safe and healthy and is crucial to the stability and progression of disadvantaged people. Seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income families should not have to live in fear of losing their home.

The lack of social housing in my riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot is a problem that has still not been solved. There are only 653 social housing units. The demand far exceeds the supply. In the city of Saint-Hyacinthe itself, there are 200 families on the waiting list for the low-rental housing units managed by the municipal housing bureau.

These figures do not even reflect the reality. When I speak to organizations that work on a daily basis with families and people looking for social housing, they tell me that many have given up. These people have asked to have their names removed from the list, since the wait times are too long and there is too much red tape. These people are facing never-ending wait times. We are talking about two to five years. The situation is critical now.

This government committed to helping people in need of housing. It signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 11 of the covenant states that parties must recognize the right of everyone to housing. Having affordable housing is not a luxury; it is a right. The NDP is calling on the government to maintain the total funding of \$1.7 billion a year currently dedicated to long-term agreements. We have long been proposing concrete solutions that are easy to implement. We are now facing a situation that is beyond critical. Without federal support, the people living in these units will simply have no other housing options.

In this time of crisis, we are calling on the government to take meaningful action by massively reinvesting in social and affordable housing for the good of our communities.

The federal budget will be tabled in two weeks. The government has an opportunity to improve the lives of our communities in a very real way by investing in housing. Now is the time to take responsibility and show some leadership on this.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1820)

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to respond to the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. Let me begin by saying that we share her concern for vulnerable Canadians that need support in meeting their housing needs.

I can assure the House that the government will indeed invest in affordable housing, as pledged during the election. We will re-establish the federal government's role in supporting affordable housing so more Canadians can find an affordable place to call home.

Our government is working to not only address the most pressing needs in the short term, we will be taking a more collaborative, whole-of-government approach to improving housing outcomes in the long term.

There is general consensus about the immediate issues facing the social housing sector. We know that some housing providers will face financial difficulties when their long-term operating agreements come to an end, leaving low-income households living in rent-geared-to income units vulnerable. As well, much of the existing social housing stock requires major capital repairs and modifications to meet the changing needs of Canadians, including seniors. Operating agreements differ from one provider to another. Some agreements provide rent subsidies for low-income households. Others provide subsidies to reduce operating costs. Still others provide for preferential rates on mortgage loans.

Some existing arrangements, as they are now, may not be the best answer for some of these projects. We are sensitive to the fact that we may need a range of solutions that address underlying problems and challenges.

Our government is committed to a strategy that will include a 10-year investment in social infrastructure. This strategy will prioritize investments in affordable housing and seniors' housing, and provide funding for communities to help homeless Canadians find stable housing. As well, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development will be working with his colleague, the Minister of Finance, on measures to encourage and support the construction of new affordable housing.

We believe there is a role for all levels of government in the provision of housing. Finding the right approach will be part of the discussions we are having with stakeholders, provinces and territories, municipalities, and others.

As I have already noted, we will begin to deliver the social infrastructure investments we have promised Canadians. We will also continue to provide current federal funding of \$238 million per year through the investment in affordable housing program. Provinces and territories match this funding and can use it to pay for capital repairs or rent supplements for social housing projects that may need such assistance.

In addition, the federal government will continue to invest in existing social housing. In 2014, this investment was approximately

\$1.7 billion in support of some 570,000 households, including 27,750 households in first nations communities.

Providing affordable housing is a priority for our government. Going forward, we will be looking for opportunities to build a stronger, more innovative, and sustainable affordable housing sector that gives Canadians better access to housing and improves their prospects and quality of life.

We will be working with our other partners and stakeholders to develop a strategy that produces meaningful long-term results. I would encourage the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot to support our efforts.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, although we share some of the same concerns and agree on certain issues, I invite the parliamentary secretary to take note of some of the constructive bills that the NDP has introduced to help people gain access to safe and affordable housing.

I am talking about Bill C-241, which seeks to recognize an individual's right to proper housing at a reasonable cost, and Bill C-400, which seeks to ensure secure, adequate, accessible, and affordable housing.

Having been the head of a community housing organization for more than 10 years, I am well aware of the different roles of municipal, provincial, and federal governments. I worked in the world of social housing for more than 10 years. I expect great things from the federal government when it comes to social housing. I saw thousands of young people benefit from social housing and saw how it gave them what they needed to get ahead in life.

• (1825)

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her helpful suggestions.

As promised during the election, our government is committed to developing a strategy to re-establish the federal role in support of affordable housing. The strategy will prioritize investments in affordable housing and seniors housing over the next 10 years. It will provide funding for communities to help homeless Canadians find stable housing and, importantly, it will promote innovation and new approaches to affordable housing and engage all levels of government and housing stakeholders.

As the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot can appreciate, much work needs to be done. Immediate measures will be implemented in the short term, but developing a more comprehensive and forward-looking strategy will take some time. The end result, better housing outcomes for all Canadians, will be worth the time and effort.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House tonight to follow up a question I asked the government on the new environmental assessment process it is building. I know this topic has been the subject of a lot of debate in the House. The debate can sometimes get quite polemical when we start talking about pipelines and who should and should not be consulted.

I would like to boil it down to what I think is a very reasonable litmus test of the new process. It is an issue that is arising in and around Winnipeg as part of the energy east proposal. The current proposal on the books is to convert a section of pipeline east of Winnipeg between Hadashville and Falcon Lake. It is a bigger piece of the pipeline than that, but for the distance between Hadashville and Falcon Lake, the pipeline runs parallel to the city of Winnipeg's aqueduct. There is some concern that either a catastrophic or sustained low-level leakage of bitumen could contaminate the Winnipeg water supply.

What I am hoping to hear tonight is an acknowledgement by the government that a litmus test for its new process should be that Winnipeggers get independent scientific advice from that process on the safety of their water supply, if that proposal goes ahead. If it is not safe, then as part of the process, there should be recommendations on how to ensure the safety of Winnipeg's water supply from the project, if it does go ahead.

I would like to leave some of the polemics aside, draw attention to what I think is a very important issue, an important test for a new process, and hear the government acknowledge that this is a reasonable test and that whatever new process it develops will ensure, with independent science, the safety of Winnipeg's water supply.

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to doing things differently, to recognizing both the importance of economic growth and the imperative of environmental responsibility.

Canadians understand the importance of natural resources to our economy. They know that this industry creates jobs and spurs investment, but they lack faith in the way we assess those projects. They have come to believe that the scales have been tipped too far in one direction.

Our government shared those concerns. That is why we committed to modernizing the National Energy Board to ensure that its composition reflects regional views and has sufficient expertise in fields such as environmental science, community development, and indigenous traditional knowledge. We are in the process of determining how these changes can best be made.

To further restore the confidence of Canadians, we have introduced an interim process for reviewing major resource projects. That approach is based on five clear principles. First, no project proponent will have to return to the starting line. Second, decisions will be based on science and evidence, including traditional indigenous knowledge. Third, the views of the public and affected communities will be sought and considered. Fourth, indigenous peoples will be consulted and, where appropriate, their rights and

Adjournment Proceedings

interests accommodated. Fifth, direct and upstream greenhouse gas emissions will be assessed.

To achieve all of this, our government intends to seek an additional four months to render a final decision on the proposed Trans Mountain expansion project, and with respect to the energy east project, we intend to seek six more months to allow the NEB to complete its work and three more months for our government to make its final decision.

We believe these are reasonable timelines and consistent with the prudent approach we have promised Canadians. With all of these efforts, our goal is straightforward: restoring public confidence in how major energy projects are reviewed.

That confidence is critical, because little can be achieved without it. As the Prime Minister has said, governments grant permits, but only communities can grant permission. If we are going to build the infrastructure to move our resources to market, Canadians need to have confidence in the environmental review process and know that it is fair and open and guided by science.

The process we have set out will take us down a different path—the right path, the path of properly weighing environmental concerns, meaningfully engaging indigenous communities, and listening to the input of Canadians. Our government will engage Canadians in a process whereby trust is rebuilt and certainty is restored and progress is made.

● (1830)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I think the parliamentary secretary and I can agree that the old process under the previous government was bad, and we agree on wanting to see a much better process.

The one thing she said that was of particular concern to me is that projects that were initiated and reviews that were initiated under the previous government may well continue under the same or a similar process and will not be subject to the exigencies of any new process, so I do worry about that.

I would like to hear tonight a commitment from the government that independent science will be a requirement of moving forward with this proposal, so that people in Winnipeg know that someone who is not working for TransCanada pipelines has looked at this project and has done whatever study needs to be done, and that they will have access to that science and to whatever recommendations come out of that study.

That is really what I am hoping we might be able to hear from the parliamentary secretary tonight.

Ms. Kim Rudd: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that science will be considered, and I can also assure the member that the five principles will be applied to any project in process.

Our government understands the importance of sustainably developing Canada's natural resources and moving them safely to market, but we also understand that it cannot happen without Canadians having confidence in the way projects are reviewed.

Adjournment Proceedings

The best way to rebuild that confidence is by meaningfully consulting with indigenous communities, restoring the importance of science, respecting indigenous traditional knowledge, listening to Canadians, and assessing direct and upstream greenhouse gas emissions linked to the project under review, all things that our government is doing.

Canadians want us to work together—as governments, as communities, as individuals—because that is how Canadians have always worked best.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:34 p.m.)

Caledon Chamber of Commerce	
Mr. Tilson	1705
Status of Women	
Ms. Ratansi	1705
Governor General's Caring Canadian Award	
Mr. Serré	1705
Workplace Safety	
Mr. Doherty	1706
Arctic Winter Games	
Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories)	1706
Tibet	
Mr. Virani	1706
Antoni Jedlinski	
Mr. Van Kesteren	1706
Donald Monroe Blackmere	
Mr. Sikand	1706
Governor General's Caring Canadian Award	
Mr. Stetski	1707
Kraft Hockeyville 2016	
Mr. Brown	1707
International Rare Disease Day	
Ms. Petitpas Taylor	1707

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Environment	
Ms. Ambrose	1707
Mr. Carr	1707
The Economy	
Ms. Ambrose	1708
Mr. Morneau	1708
Ms. Ambrose	1708
Mr. Morneau	1708
Mr. Lebel	1708
Mr. Morneau	1708
Mr. Lebel	1708
Mr. Morneau	1708
Forestry Industry	
Mr. Julian	1708
Mr. Lametti	1708
Mr. Julian	1708
Mr. Lametti	1708
Indigenous Affairs	
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	1709
Mr. Picard	1709
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	1709
Mr. Picard	1709
Finance	
Mr. McColeman	1709
Mr. Morneau	1709
Mr. McColeman	1709
Mr. Morneau	1709
Mr. Deltell	1709

Mr. Morneau	1709
Mr. Deltell	1710
Mr. Morneau	1710
Air Transportation	
Mrs. Block	1710
Mr. Fergus	1710
Mrs. Block	1710
Mr. Fergus	1710
The Environment	
Ms. Sansoucy	1710
Mr. Wilkinson	1710
Mr. Cullen	1710
Mr. Wilkinson	1711
Indigenous Affairs	
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	1711
Mr. Casey (Charlottetown)	1711
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	1711
Mr. Casey (Charlottetown)	1711
Mr. Strahl	1711
Mr. Casey (Charlottetown)	1711
Mr. Strahl	1711
Mr. Casey (Charlottetown)	1711
Canada Revenue Agency	
Ms. Mathysen	1712
Mrs. Lebouthillier	1712
Mr. Dusseault	1712
Mrs. Lebouthillier	1712
Canadian Coast Guard	
Mr. Fisher	1712
Mr. Cormier	1712
Justice	
Mr. Nicholson	1712
Mr. Casey (Charlottetown)	1712
Mr. Cooper	1713
Mr. Casey (Charlottetown)	1713
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Saroya	1713
Mr. McCallum	1713
Mr. Saroya	1713
Mr. McCallum	1713
The Senate	
Mr. Weir	1713
Mr. Brison	1713
Agriculture and Agri-food	
Ms. Brosseau	1713
Mr. MacAulay	1713
Natural Resources	
Ms. Bergen	1713
Mr. Carr	1714
The Economy	
Mr. Dreeshen	1714
Ms. Mihychuk	1714
Mr. Dreeshen	1714

Mr. Carr	1714
Poverty	
Ms. Dzerowicz	1714
Mr. Morneau	1714
Democratic Reform	
Mr. Richards	1714
Ms. Monsef	1714
Air Canada	
Mr. Boulerice	1715
Mr. Garneau	1715
Natural Resources	
Mr. Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	1715
Mr. Carr	1715
Democratic Reform	
Mr. Reid	1715
Ms. Monsef	1715
Canada Revenue Agency	
Mr. Ste-Marie	1715
Mrs. Lebouthillier	1715
Natural Resources	
Ms. Puzé	1715
Mr. Carr	1715
Presence in Gallery	
The Speaker	1716
Points of Order	
Public Accounts of Canada, 2007	
Mr. Cuzner	1716
Business of the House	
Mr. Scheer	1716
Mr. LeBlanc	1716
Motion	1716
(Motion agreed to)	1717

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Citizenship Act	
Bill C-6. Second reading	1717
Mr. Aldag	1717
Mr. Kmiec	1718
Mr. Lamoureux	1718
Mr. Peschisolido	1718
Mr. Di Iorio	1719
Mr. Kmiec	1719
Mr. Lamoureux	1720
Mr. Kmiec	1720

Mr. Housefather	1722
Mr. Barsalou-Duval	1722
Mrs. Zahid	1722
Mr. Brassard	1724
Ms. Sansoucy	1724
Mr. Di Iorio	1724
Mr. Peterson	1724
Mr. MacGregor	1725
Mr. Virani	1725
Mr. Saroya	1726
Mr. Long	1727
Ms. Hardcastle	1727
Mr. Brassard	1727
Mrs. Shanahan	1727
Ms. Sansoucy	1728
Mr. Lamoureux	1729
Mr. Davies	1729
Mr. DeCoursey	1730
Mr. Stewart	1731
Mr. Lamoureux	1731
Mr. Stewart	1732
Mr. DeCoursey	1732
Mr. Davies	1733
Mr. Cooper	1733
Mr. Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	1734
Mr. Stewart	1734
Mr. Fraser (West Nova)	1734
Mr. Fraser (West Nova)	1734
Mr. Brassard	1736
Mr. Davies	1736
Mr. Peterson	1736
Ms. Sahota	1737
Mr. Virani	1738
Mr. Berthold	1738
Mr. Stewart	1739
Mr. MacGregor	1740
Mrs. Wagantall	1740
Mr. Davies	1740
Division on motion deferred	1741

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Housing	
Ms. Sansoucy	1741
Mr. Duguid	1742
The Environment	
Mr. Blaikie	1743
Ms. Rudd	1743

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <http://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.noscommunes.ca>