



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, October 31, 2013**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 31, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1005)

[*English*]

### OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC)** moved that Bill C-5, an act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to congratulate the Prime Minister and the Minister of International Trade for the agreement in principle on the Canada-Europe trade agreement, the largest free trade agreement Canada has completed. This is a great achievement and demonstrates that our economic action plan is working.

[*Translation*]

We are here today to talk about the new legislative provisions to amend the Atlantic accord implementation acts, in order to extend occupational health and safety jurisdictions to Canada's offshore areas.

Before we talk more about these legislative provisions, I would like to set the stage by emphasizing how vital the offshore resources industry is to Atlantic Canada and to our country's economy.

[*English*]

There is no question that the offshore oil and gas industries have made an enormous economic contribution to Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that these industries have transformed the economy of eastern Canada.

Not long ago, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador was receiving the highest per capita equalization payments in the country. Today it is among our strongest provincial economies and now contributes to the equalization program.

Newfoundland and Labrador's GDP has performed at or above the national average in nine of the past 13 years. A large part of that success comes from offshore oil and gas, which accounted for 33% of Newfoundland and Labrador's GDP in 2011. Resource revenues, again primarily from the offshore, have allowed the province to steadily pay down its debt. The total provincial debt was about \$7.7 billion in 2012, down from a high of \$12 billion just eight years ago.

Simply put, offshore energy development has given Newfoundland and Labrador more jobs, lower taxes, and new investments in services and infrastructure that play an important role in building stronger communities. These benefits will continue to grow.

Hibernia was the largest project of any kind ever undertaken in Newfoundland and Labrador. As valuable as Hibernia has been, the Hebron project may be even bigger. Hebron represents a capital investment of as much as \$14 billion. It could deliver \$20 billion in taxes and royalties for the province over the 30-year life of the project.

Just a few months ago, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board announced its latest call for bids for exploration licences for the offshore of Newfoundland and Labrador, netting \$117 million in work commitments by major players in the oil industry.

Nova Scotia's offshore area also offers enormous potential. The Play Fairway analysis, undertaken by the government of Nova Scotia, estimates that the offshore area may contain eight billion barrels of oil and 3.3 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. The Atlantic offshore is a major gas producer, with three gas fields serving Atlantic Canada and the U.S. northeast.

In the past two years, the Nova Scotia offshore area has seen the largest bids ever for offshore parcels in Atlantic Canada, with more than a total of \$2 billion bid for 12 parcels of land. Shell Canada and BP clearly see the potential that exists in the Nova Scotia offshore.

Meanwhile, there is an estimated 120 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and production continues to grow. Sable Island's 270 million cubic feet a day will soon be joined by 200 million cubic feet a day from Deep Panuke.

[*Translation*]

It is essential that Canada continue to ensure that our offshore industries carry out their activities safely and in compliance with the most stringent environmental standards. Canadians expect to see a world-class regulatory body, and our government is taking the measures necessary to ensure Canadians' continued satisfaction in that regard.

*Government Orders*

That is why we are bringing in new legislation to clarify provincial and federal responsibilities when it comes to offshore occupational health and safety.

The accord's implementation acts are the cornerstone of all offshore oil and gas activities. They give the boards the legal authority to regulate oil and gas activities on behalf of the provinces. Every day, Canada's offshore workers have to deal with a difficult work environment.

The harsh weather conditions in Atlantic Canada and the remoteness of their workplace are just two difficulties that come to mind. The safety of the courageous men and women who work in this environment must always be our main concern.

[English]

The changes we intend to make need to be mirrored by provincial legislation in order for the amendments to come into force. Our Conservative government has been working closely with the governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia to achieve this. Both provinces introduced their legislation in May, and both have given royal assent to their respective bills. This time, they must wait for the legislation to pass our federal Parliament for the new regime to come to fruition.

The proposed amendments would address gaps in the current legislation. They would invest authority for offshore occupational health and safety in the accord acts.

There are two safety regimes that apply to workers offshore. Occupational health and safety pertains to the workers in the sense of the hazards they may face, their protective equipment, and safeguards on the equipment they use in their functions. It also pertains to three essential worker rights: the right to refuse dangerous work, the right to information, and the right to participate in making decisions on workplace health and safety. Under the current regime, occupational health and safety is the jurisdiction of the provinces.

Operational safety pertains to workplace systems, facilities, and equipment as well as the risk management and integrity of those systems, facilities, and equipment. Examples are the prevention of gas blowouts, the ability of a facility to withstand storms, and a facility's fire suppression systems. Operational safety was included in the accord acts and provided that the offshore petroleum boards be responsible on behalf of both levels of government.

Following a tragic accident, when a worker was killed due to an improperly installed door, the overlap of occupational health and safety and operational safety created a grey area. It was not clear whether the door's installation fell under operational safety or occupational safety. The lack of clarity prevented any party from being liable. It was unclear under whose jurisdiction the incident should be regulated. The provinces and the federal government agreed that the best course of action was to eliminate the grey area and to incorporate the power to regulate occupational health and safety directly in the accord acts.

For the section on occupational health and safety, which would typically fall under the purview of the Minister of Labour, the legislation specifies that the Minister of Natural Resources may receive advice from the Minister of Labour and that any regulations

related to occupational health and safety must be made on the recommendation of both ministers.

In addition to fixing this historic issue, the legislation would establish a hierarchy of responsibility. It would make operations operators ultimately responsible for all activities related to their authorization. It would also spell out the specific duties expected of operators, employers, supervisors, employees, contractors, and interest holders.

The nature of the offshore is that work sites are usually hundreds of kilometres from shore. We would be ensuring that the health and safety regime also applied to workers in transit to the offshore. These workers could refuse to be transported if there were safety concerns.

The legislation would also include powers to establish regulations related to additional safety equipment for workers in transit. Offshore board inspectors would also have the power to conduct compliance audits on the vessels used to transport workers. These measures would significantly enhance workers' safety in the offshore.

This legislation would also give new powers to offshore board officers to further enhance safety. For example, they would have the power to inspect anything, take samples, meet in private with any individual, and inspect living quarters.

● (1010)

Due to the distance and isolation offshore activities regularly require, offshore board officers would have the power to act in exigent circumstances. That is, they could act without a warrant to preserve evidence or to prevent non-compliance. The requisite warrant would have to be sought from and granted by a judge or a justice of the peace post activity.

The legislation would also clarify certain issues regarding the chief safety officer. The position of this officer could not be held by the CEO. This would ensure that safety was an independent function within the senior management of each offshore board. The chief safety officer would have to review and provide written recommendations related to safety on all authorizations. This would formalize the process that both boards are already following.

Chief safety officers would also be granted the power to allow regulatory substitutions, which would be made on application by an operator who would have to satisfy the SFO that the substitution provided an equivalent or greater level of safety. The SFO also could require that the operator or employer establish a special occupational health and safety committee. The committee would be in addition to the workplace health and safety committee that all workplaces with more than five employees must establish.

We would also introduce a new appeal process for the most serious cases. In certain special cases, the provincial minister would be able to appoint a special officer. The legislation is very clear that this could only be done where there were reasonable grounds to believe that such an appointment was warranted to avoid a serious risk to health and safety and that the risk could not be avoided by the use of other means available through the accord acts. Both the federal and provincial ministers would have to agree that the required conditions had been fulfilled. The orders of a special officer would supersede those of all other officers, including the chief safety officer.

These amendments would create a more transparent regime for Canada's offshore industry. The health and safety of Canadians and protecting the environment are among the Government of Canada's top priorities. That is why Canada's offshore installations and the equipment and training required to operate them must meet strict regulatory standards that are among the highest in the world. Nevertheless, we recognize that our offshore regime can be improved, and today we are taking steps to do just that.

Our government recognizes that accidents can happen anywhere, regardless of laws and safety measures. We are also very confident in our safeguards. We have very strong environmental laws and standards and a robust, well-developed safety regime for offshore exploration and drilling.

On our east coast, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board are responsible for evaluating every project for compliance with federal regulations. Drilling cannot occur unless the responsible board is satisfied that drilling plans are safe for workers and safe for the environment.

Beyond high standards for training, safety, and equipment, oil and gas companies are required to maintain environmental protection and spill response plans. The government is committed to the polluter-pays principle and the responsible management of risks. The responsibility rests with operators to immediately take all reasonable measures to clean up a spill and prevent further spillage. Of course, the government needs to be prepared to step in to help if need be.

As the regulators, the National Energy Board or offshore boards would be the government's lead agencies for the response. Using aerial surveillance and satellite imagery for detection and tracking, they could provide advice about a spill with trajectory modelling, weather and sea-state forecasts and warnings, the location of wildlife and sensitive ecosystems, and cleanup and remediation options.

● (1015)

[Translation]

I am certain that once these legislative provisions are in place, the offshore boards will do their job and determine what is safe for workers and the environment.

I would like to speak very briefly about the creation of a separate regulatory body for offshore safety.

First, I would like to make it clear that these legislative provisions are not related to this issue.

### *Government Orders*

Work on these provisions started well before this recommendation was made for the first time. These legislative provisions were the result of the accident off the coast of Nova Scotia, which I mentioned earlier.

With respect to the actual recommendation, we continue to work with the provinces on this very important issue. We expressed concerns about the fragmentation of our offshore regime and the proliferation of regulatory bodies. We want to ensure that the system is as simple as possible and protects Canadians' health and safety. We will continue to discuss these issues with our provincial counterparts.

Our government has always adopted a safe and prudent approach to offshore drilling, an approach that protects Canada's offshore workers and the environment.

It is vital that all development activities in Canada, and not just offshore activities, ensure the safety of workers and protect the environment. We have adopted many measures in Canada's resource sector to ensure that this objective is the main focus of our regulatory bodies.

● (1020)

[English]

I hope that all members will support this important legislation.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see that this government wants to protect workers for once. However, it could have done better. Unfortunately, the government missed an opportunity.

The minister mentioned all kinds of things in his statement, especially with respect to profits. I remind him that profits do not usually go hand in hand with workplace health and safety. This bill should be about workplace health and safety exclusively, and I urge the minister to honour that.

After the Ocean Ranger incidents and the helicopter crash on March 12 in which 17 people died, why did the government not agree to the 29th recommendation in the Wells report? By the same token, why did the government not express an interest in enhancing the Canadian Coast Guard and increasing the number of rescue helicopters in the Royal Canadian Air Force assigned to offshore rigs?

**Hon. Joe Oliver:** Mr. Speaker, this legislation has nothing to do with the tragic helicopter accident off the coast of Newfoundland. This legislation is a response to an accident that happened in Nova Scotia, in which someone was killed as a result of an improperly installed door.

*Government Orders*

The legislation was not clear about who was responsible, and as a result, no legal action could be taken. This legislation fixes the ambiguity with respect to workplace health and safety in the accord implementation acts.

The boards are established along with the provinces, and this legislation was developed with Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Both governments support and have passed their corresponding legislation.

We will continue to discuss Commissioner Wells' inquiry with Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

[*English*]

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's comments today. However, his answer had more to do with the question I will be asking than the question from my hon. colleague from the NDP.

I do want to ask about the Wells commission, because the accident, which happened three kilometres off of St. John's, Newfoundland, occurred four years ago in 2009. We still have not seen any legislation from the government to deal with the recommendations made by Commissioner Robert Wells, particularly recommendation no. 29, which talked about the creation of a new, independent, stand-alone safety regulator to ensure offshore safety.

The minister talked about the role of the chief safety officer, who would report to the board. If the board is dominated by representatives of employers, people who in the past have worked for employers as officers and so forth or senior people in companies, what would their predilection be? Hopefully they would be concerned with safety, but we have to look at this question of a separate regulator.

The minister also talked more broadly about the industry nationally. Does he feel that his past comments about environmental groups and his references to eco-terrorists and so forth have helped to create fertile ground in the U.S. for the support of Keystone XL?

**Hon. Joe Oliver:** Mr. Speaker, those are two rather different questions, one is non-fiction and the other is closer to fiction or science fiction.

Let me deal with recommendation no. 29 of the Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry, the recommendation to establish an independent safety regulator.

Canada's offshore regulatory regime is world-class and strong. I want to emphasize that it has independent regulators and high standards for worker safety, environmental protection and resource conservation. These are independent boards and are not beholden to industry in any way. It is important to note that the federal government does not support the proliferation of regulators when the result would do nothing to enhance safety, worker protection or environmental protection, for that matter.

Nevertheless, senior officers at Natural Resources Canada remain in close contact with their counterparts in Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia on a host of issues relating to offshore oil and gas production and in respect to this particular recommendation. We will be continuing to pursue that dialogue and hope that we can arrive at something that will be satisfactory.

Moving on to the fiction, the allegation, those words, which I will not repeat, were not stated by me but attributed to me on a number of occasions by political opponents and others. We very much respect the concern that Canadians have for their safety as well as for the environment and our beautiful natural heritage. We have done a great deal to protect the environment and will continue to do so.

• (1025)

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in my riding the top issues that concern us are jobs and the economy. That is why I have always been proud that our government is focused like a laser on jobs and the economy.

This particular bill is about a robust regulatory regime to contribute to our offshore resources. I understand that it will contribute to economic growth in Canada. Therefore, I would ask the minister to elaborate for the House if and how he thinks these amendments would contribute to a sustainable oil and gas industry.

**Hon. Joe Oliver:** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to the member for the question because this area, as I indicated in my comments, is crucially important not only for Atlantic Canada but for all Canadians.

Offshore oil production from Atlantic Canada contributes significantly to national production, including 35% of total Canadian light crude production and 10% of total Canadian crude production in 2009.

The offshore oil and gas industry is important to provincial economies. In 2009, it was 3% of Nova Scotia's GDP, and directly and indirectly employed over 4,700 people, while offshore oil and gas accounted for 33% of Newfoundland and Labrador's GDP in 2011. The offshore oil and gas industry has also provided approximately \$8 billion in royalties to those provinces since the offset of production. The industry also provides economic benefits through spinoff activities and contributes to federal and provincial tax revenues, which are so important for funding critical social programs such as health care, education and housing.

The offshore oil and gas industry contributes more to national GDP than all other ocean-related industries, such as fisheries, government, tourism and transportation, by a significant margin.

Providing safety for workers is a critical underpinning to this industry. That is why we ask all members to support the bill.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could comment on the fact that the bill provides a safety regime in legislation for the offshore for the first time, but we also have before the House Bill C-4. This is a 300-page omnibus bill amending over 70 pieces of legislation, one of the provisions of which strips the health and safety officers in regimes and jurisdictions across the country of their powers and puts nearly all of those powers in the hands of the minister. On the one hand the legislation purports to give authority to the C-NLOPB and the offshore safety regulation, and on the other hand, Bill C-4 takes it away.

Could the minister explain why the government is doing that and why it thinks the health and safety of workers throughout this country is so malleable in its hands?

• (1030)

**Hon. Joe Oliver:** Mr. Speaker, discussions with the province led to the conclusion that it was impossible to define the term “danger”. It was decided that the best course of action was to rely on the standard interpretation of that word, but to create a power to define the term if the standard definition or legal interpretation changed to a point that altered the effectiveness of the OHS portion of the accord acts. That is why we are seeking power to define certain terms by regulation when this is traditionally a power reserved for Parliament.

The terms “dive site” and “diving operation” and “incident” were later added to this list. The provinces also requested that the definitions of Nova Scotia's social legislation and Newfoundland and Labrador's social legislation be amendable in this fashion as it most closely follows the existing accord acts. This is a practical way to achieve the public policy objective and it is more effective done through regulation than through legislation.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this legislation, Bill C-5, at second reading. This is an extremely important piece of legislation as it affects the offshore of Newfoundland and Labrador and the workers who risk their lives in a dangerous occupation, travelling back and forth to oil rigs, working on exploration vessels and working offshore for as much as three weeks at a time in an industry that is constantly changing.

At the beginning of offshore exploration, exploration was going on in shallow waters near to shore. Now there are oil rigs and exploration hundreds of kilometres offshore. Transportation is by helicopter, which takes as much as two or three hours to get back and forth. That is clearly a dangerous situation, as we know. Not only are risks being assumed by individuals in pursuit of a livelihood for themselves and their families; but it is also extremely important economic activity for the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, as well as for the taxpayers and the Government of Canada in terms of sharing in the revenue from the offshore oil industry in Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia.

Unfortunately, for many years, going back as early as 1992, the offshore safety regime was not controlled by the provinces themselves for workers in Newfoundland and Labrador or in Nova Scotia. The labour portfolios had responsibility for occupational health and safety. That was taken away in 1992 by legislation and given over to the offshore petroleum boards. In their supposed

wisdom of the day, they had draft regulations. It was not a situation in which somebody who did something contrary to those draft regulations could actually be charged, treated as an offender, taken before a court, fined or dealt with appropriately and be required to follow the regulations. No, it was a very different regime. The regime was that there were draft regulations, and those draft regulations were really just a framework or guideline. That was entirely unsatisfactory to the workers, and my party in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador were very strongly opposed to this particular approach.

I will quote from former Justice Wells, of the Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry, who talked about this issue. The minister claims that this has nothing to do with the Cougar crash and inquiry, that this is something that has been going on for a long time, but it is very important to know that Mr. Justice Wells did a very extensive study of the offshore health and safety regime. He led an inquiry into the Cougar helicopter crash that happened in March of 2009, in which 18 people were on board a helicopter that crashed; 17 were killed and there was 1 sole survivor. It led to an inquiry being undertaken by former Justice Wells into these fatalities. He talked about his work, learning about how health and safety deficiencies are attended to in the offshore oil industry. On page 275 of his report, he stated he learned the differences between prescriptive regulation and performance-based regulation.

What we have in this particular situation, until now, is what are called performance-based regulations. In other words, the regulator comes up with a plan and objectives for safety, and the companies decide how they shall go about meeting those objectives; whereas the regulatory regime in this legislation says what must be done, the standard that must be met, and the requirement is to comply. New Democrats have been calling for this power for years. When anyone objected to the regime that only had guidelines, the answer always given was, “We have the ultimate power, and that is to shut down the operation if it is deemed to be unsafe”.

• (1035)

That, of course, never happened. With the cost of doing that, the way of getting compliance was not satisfactory. We then get into a situation where the same agent, the same organization, the same agency that is responsible for the management and control of the operation, control of the whole of the exploration and production activity, methods, schedules and all of that, is also dealing with health and safety.

That has been deemed by many countries and by the Wells commission of inquiry to be unsatisfactory. He says in his report—and recommendation no. 29 has already been mentioned by one of my colleagues—that there should be a new independent stand-alone safety regulator:

Such a Safety Regulator would have to be established, mandated, and funded by both Governments by way of legislative amendment, regulation, or memorandum of understanding, or other means.

In the lead-up to that he said:

### *Government Orders*

I believe that the recommendation which follows this explanatory note will be the most important in this entire report. Until the end of 2009, the C-NL offshore operated under a primarily prescriptive regime which established the requirements under which the oil operators filed their Safety Plans, received authorizations, and conducted their exploration and production. The essential task of the Regulator was to ensure that the oil operators adhered to what was required of them. This was called the prescriptive system of regulation.

They then changed that entirely. The regulations changed into the performance goal-based regime whereby the regulations specify, and the regulator sets the goals and the operators respond by saying how they will achieve them.

He was not satisfied with that. He said that the new offshore goal regulator regime was introduced by regulation in January 2010. There were no changes made at the time to the regulatory body to strengthen and prepare it for the new and much more demanding regime. He says that there ought to be a separate, powerful, independent, knowledgeable body equipped with expert advice, and he made the recommendation I just quoted.

That is the one flaw in this regime. We support this legislation because it brings us from a situation of operating with draft regulations to a situation where we now have regulations in force. We have authority by legislation. This has been worked on for a number of years by negotiators on behalf of the workers in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. The former NDP Government of Nova Scotia and the PC Government of Newfoundland and Labrador worked on these for a number of years.

The labour representatives support this approach. They support the fact that this regulation is there. They worked very hard to achieve a situation where they believe that the offshore workers have the same level of protection as the onshore workers. That is an important principle that is included in this bill. As a result of the work of the labour representatives in these negotiations, they believe this has been achieved.

The second principle is the protection of employees' rights to know and to participate, to refuse unsafe work and to be protected from reprisal. That is there, as well as support for an occupational health and safety culture that recognizes the shared responsibilities in the workplace between employees and employers for a safety regime.

That is why we support it. We think it is a good step forward to ensure that the safety regime is covered by enforceable legislation, and we think that is going to be a better system to protect workers and to protect workers who refuse unsafe work.

Where we have the problem is in the fact that it is included in the same regulatory body as all other aspects of offshore development, whether they be plans for production or exploration, design of facilities and all of that. There is no separate regulator.

• (1040)

Why should we have one? Looking at other countries, we see that in 2001, for example, Norway adopted the concept of having a separate safety regulator. A few years later, Australia did the same thing. Their rationale for imposing separate safety regulators was that there may be inherent conflicts within a single regulator that, on the one hand, regulates exploration and production and at the same

time is required to make the hard decisions that a safety regulator must make.

We also had the same situation in the United Kingdom, where it was also believed that this was required. These changes were made and they came from government, not from industry. The changes have been fully accepted by industry, however, and they are deemed to be working, according to Justice Wells in his report, and he said that it was "...independent minds outside the industry which perceived the inherent conflict between exploration and production on the one hand and safety on the other...".

A second problem that goes against the notion of continuing with a single regulator is something called "regulatory capture", which is well known in the industry and other types of industrial regulation. I am reading here from the report at page 277:

...regulators and those they regulate work so closely together that friendships and close working relationships can develop. Common interests and what are sometimes referred to as cozy relationships may unconsciously influence the hard decisions that safety regulation requires.

The report did not state, nor did Justice Wells say, that he found that type of regulatory capture in existence. The offshore industry is relatively new and small, and he did not expect regulatory capture to occur. "Nevertheless", he said, "every effort should be made to ensure that it never happens".

These are two of the reasons why this should be a separate regulatory body. As Justice Wells said, the recommendation was one of the most important ones he made. It was adopted by the Newfoundland and Labrador government; it supported that recommendation. The workers themselves support that recommendation. The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour supports that recommendation 29. We supported it in Newfoundland and Labrador and we support it here, that there should be a separate regulatory body.

The minister says we do not need to have a proliferation of agencies and organizations. We are not talking about a proliferation here; we are talking about a separate health and safety regime in the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore industry where it is extremely important to have that concern.



*Government Orders*

We have a situation now, and it is relevant to the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore and also to the situation involving helicopter transport back and forth to the rigs. That has to do with the resumption of night flights. During the course of Mr. Justice Wells' inquiry, he made an interim recommendation that all night flights of helicopters back and forth to the rigs be stopped. That has been in place since around February 2010, when he made that recommendation. It was implemented by the C-NLOPB, and night flights have not been a part of the regime of the offshore, much to the relief of the workers because part of the evidence heard during Mr. Justice Wells' inquiry was that the survivability from a crash at night in a helicopter was significantly lowered because it happened at night.

The situation is that this helicopter crashed because it had a loss of main gearbox lubricant. The pilots thought, and were told, that the helicopter had the capability of flying for 30 minutes in what is called a "run dry" state, with no gearbox lubricant. That is a standard for all class A helicopters in use in the world. Unbeknownst to the pilots, there was an exemption given to Sikorsky, and the helicopter did not have that capability, so 10 minutes after the helicopter lost main gearbox oil it crashed, killing 17 of the 18 people on board.

• (1045)

In its February 2011 report, the Transportation Safety Board recommended that all class A helicopters be required to have that 30-minute run-dry capability and asked Transport Canada to enforce that ruling. Transport Canada did not accept that recommendation, nor did it place any restrictions or limitations on these helicopters being used to transport people hundreds of kilometres over the ocean. It left that in place, following what the American FAA did in saying that it would not require Sikorsky to retrofit its helicopter fleet.

That created a regime of concern by offshore workers. They made protestations about it. They made representations to the C-NLOPB. A moratorium on night flights was maintained up until now. However, now the operators, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, are going back to the C-NLOPB seeking to resume night flights. We are back to the situation in which the regulator, which is in charge of all aspects of offshore production safety and regulations, looking at this very question of offshore health and safety.

I believe there would be more confidence among the workers and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia if they knew that a decision that was going to be made would be made by a separate, independent health and safety regulator whose only mandate and only concern was the safety of workers. The independent regulator would be making that decision and would take into consideration what the options are. One of the options would be to have more helicopters instead of having night flights.

The issue is how many people can be transported and in what period of time. The reason they want night flights and want to fly in the dark is they do not have enough helicopters to do the transportation in the daytime. The simple solution is to have more helicopters. There is a cost involved, yes, but if safety requires it, then I would expect that an independent health and safety regulator, with no concerns other than health and safety, would be in a better position to make the decision that night flights would not be permitted in the offshore, even if it was a tough decision.

That is one concrete example of the concern that was raised about this issue and the need for an independent regulator. Recommendation 29 of Mr. Justice Wells' report on the offshore helicopter safety inquiry states it very eloquently, with a lot of background information. A lot of work was done, with a lot of consultations and visits to other countries. Whether from the U.K., Norway, or Australia, experts and expertise were brought forward. Retired Justice Wells did a most thorough report and made that recommendation.

It is a pity that it was not adopted by the Government of Canada. The government failed to do that despite the urging of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Justice Wells, the unions involved, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, and many others who are concerned about the offshore health and safety regime.

That said, we do regard this bill as a step forward. Bill C-5 would put into regulation and legislation what was treated as draft regulations for nearly 20 years. It is an unsatisfactory situation that would be resolved. For that reason, we are supporting the legislation at second reading.

I see that my time is nearly up, but I would be happy to answer any questions or respond to any comments my colleagues would have with respect to the bill. As I say, we support it, but we are concerned that there is a lack of an independent regulator to enforce these regulations.

• (1050)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was interesting when the minister introduced the legislation. He started off by talking about the prosperity the region is enjoying because of its natural resources. Maybe we could echo some of those comments, in the sense that we in the Liberal Party acknowledge that natural resources have been able to contribute to the overall wealth of our nation. It is gratifying to see the different regions of our country that are able to tap into those natural resources and generate wealth. Seeing some of the things going on out on the Atlantic coast is very encouraging.

That said, it surprises me, given the importance of our natural resources and being able to tap into them, that we have to be concerned about health care, safety, regulations, and the right to deny work in dangerous situations. These are all very important issues that Canadians want us to stay on top of.

My question to the member is this: does he believe that the government could have and should have acted in a quicker fashion, given that the incident that precipitated this legislation took place back in 2009? Given the importance of the industry for all of Canada, why has it taken so long to provide this legislation?

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Speaker, yes, natural resources are important, and it is gratifying to see provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia benefiting from offshore oil and gas exploration and development.

*Government Orders*

I think a lot of Canadians do not realize that in the case of oil, for example, the operations off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador produce the equivalent of 40% of Canada's requirement for light crude, or close to it. Much of it is exported. Almost all of it is exported directly to the United States or elsewhere by the operators, although some of it is refined in Newfoundland and Labrador. The extent of the production is really very high when compared to the Canadian requirements for light crude. It could contribute to energy security for Canada in a very important way, and we have just seen some new exploration successes that will see the industry continue for quite some years to come.

I am not sure if it is true to say that the decision to bring forth this legislation was prompted by the Cougar helicopter crash in 2009. Discussions and negotiations have been going on since 2002. I think we have to all agree that it has been at a rather slow pace and that there did not seem to be a degree of urgency on the part of the Government of Canada to move this measure forward. I am disappointed that it has taken so long.

As I indicated, our party raised the issue on numerous occasions in the legislature of Newfoundland and Labrador when I was there and leading the Newfoundland New Democratic Party. We urged the kind of legislation and regulation that we now have, which was to take it out of the draft, put it into the regulations, make it enforceable, and have a proper regime.

It has been a long time coming. I suppose there was resistance from the industry, which believed it had a new way of doing things and that we could not tell it what to do. The industry believed that it knew more about it than the government. That was the attitude, and I think the Government of Canada listened to that for far too long.

• (1055)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to the impression left by the Minister of Natural Resources, the bill before us, Bill C-5, deals entirely with offshore health and safety affecting the workers, transportation of workers, and their right to refuse unsafe work. The member for St. John's East has knowledge and a deep background on the very slow pace of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board in taking worker safety seriously, and that is a real concern for me as well.

I would like to underline that although the Minister of Natural Resources talked about how this bill would make environmental progress, there is none of that in the bill. I would like to know if my hon. colleague would agree with me that it falls far short of the independent safety board that we really need, because in practice, these offshore petroleum boards are not unbiased; in practice, they operate to promote offshore oil and gas.

Would my hon. colleague agree with me that the legislation before us is indeed better than nothing, but falls far short of what we would all like to see, based on the recommendations of Mr. Wells?

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right: it is a good step forward, but it falls far short, particularly in terms of recommendation 29 with respect to independence.

The member is also right in saying that although the minister talked about environmental issues, there is absolutely nothing in this

legislation that deals with the environment. In fact, that has been another criticism of the offshore oil and gas regime, particularly with respect to even having access to the environmental monitoring that ought to be taking place. That monitoring is not done by independent monitors; in fact, researchers and academics are denied access to the oil platforms for the purpose of even counting birds, doing basic studies, or following up on baseline studies that might have been done years ago.

As a result, we have a situation in which the people who are expected to follow the regulations are the ones who are doing the monitoring. It is not being done by somebody independent. That is the situation in the environmental field, and unfortunately that was also the situation with respect to offshore safety when it came to the lack of regulations: the standards were being set by government, but how to do it was left up to the industry.

In this particular case, we still have a problem in that the same regulator is dealing with both aspects of offshore operations, and we believe that is wrong.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member to elaborate on how he would see a stand-alone safety regulator operating and how he would see such a regulator set up.

Also, the member may have heard my question to the minister earlier about his past comments. In relation to environmentalists in Canada, the minister referred to environmentalists and "other radical groups". I wonder if the member feels that is the sort of thing that creates fertile ground for Canada in making the case it is trying to make in the U.S. these days.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Speaker, obviously the kind of language used by the minister and other representatives of the government in dismissing concerns about climate change, dismissing representations being made by environmentalists and others, and dismissing science in general has been detrimental to the case for proper development of oil and gas in the country.

In fact, the government has made it difficult for people to understand the details and to be able to participate in regulatory reviews. That has led to tremendous difficulties in the United States, where there is strong opposition to the Keystone pipeline development and others. The government has itself to blame for some of the opposition that has occurred. I agree with the member on that point.

In this particular case of the offshore safety regime, I would like to underscore my concerns about this regime not being an independent safety regime. That is an important aspect of our participation in this debate.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

● (1100)

*[English]***CHATHAM O'DONAGHUE'S IRONMEN**

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate the Chatham O'Donaghue's Ironmen baseball team, which recently won the New Brunswick Senior Baseball League Championship.

This is the 11th championship title for the Ironmen over the years. They will be going on to represent the province of New Brunswick, while in Newfoundland, at the Canadian Senior Baseball Championships.

It was a great team effort, but I do have to single out the skipper, who celebrated a milestone birthday along with the win.

I also acknowledge the dedicated fans who have supported and cheered for the Ironmen at every game. These fans will get the chance to cheer them on at home, as the Ironmen have just been selected to host the 2015 National Senior Championships.

The Ironmen are wonderful representatives of not only New Brunswick but of the Miramichi. We are all very proud of their accomplishments and wish them great success in Newfoundland in 2014.

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**HOCKEY**

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the return of men's hockey at Laurentian University after a 14-year hiatus and the launch of women's hockey for the first time. Sport brings people together and reflects many of the values that our country holds dear.

I had the opportunity to attend with my daughter the LU men's home opener this past weekend, and it was clear that the university's goal of bringing the community together had been a tremendous success, with a completely sold out arena, a usual occurrence this year.

As I looked around the crowd, I could see young and old enjoying the game and I was filled with a sense of pride for my community and my university.

I also want to thank Laurentian University for its academic leadership. Laurentian is working on its second campus in Barrie. My colleague across the floor, the MP for Barrie, is lucky to have such a great university partner in his community as well. At least now on a few occasions we can cheer for the same team.

With that, I would like to say go, Voyageurs, go.

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**DIWALI AND BANDI CHHOR DIVAS**

**Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this coming Sunday, people around the world will be celebrating Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

Diwali is the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil and the renewal of life.

Bandi Chhor Divas commemorates the release of the sixth Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind Singh Ji, from prison and his subsequent arrival in Amritsar during the Diwali festival.

It is a time of great joy, celebration, and light. It is when the whole family and friends get together to enjoy wonderful food, company, and fireworks.

As we all gather with our families and friends to celebrate, on behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to wish everyone celebrating around the world a very happy, healthy, and prosperous Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

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**BRAIN TUMOUR AWARENESS MONTH**

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the end of Brain Tumour Awareness Month in Canada. During this month, over 800 Canadians will have been diagnosed with a brain tumour, like our dear friend Trevor Harrison, and we keep them in our thoughts.

Unfortunately, not all Canadians will have equal access to the treatments they need, as geography remains a significant barrier for Canadians to get the care and help they require.

Where is the mechanism to count all diagnosed tumours for each province and territory in accordance with a motion passed in the House in 2007?

Great strides have been made in research about this unique form of cancer, but much more work remains to be done. That is one of the reasons we need 2014 to be the year of the brain and a national brain strategy for the 10 million Canadians who will be affected by a brain or psychiatric condition at some point in their lives.

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**CHARLESWOOD**

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Charleswood.

Charleswood is unique among Winnipeg's suburban areas in that it retains a semi-rural atmosphere. Many streets remain unpaved, and do not have sidewalks, and some are lined with ditches.

There are many places to enjoy nature. There are many trails and a very large urban forest. Charleswood is blessed with the spectacular Assiniboine Park on the east side and the Assiniboine River on the north side.

The people of Charleswood embrace all that is Canadian sport, from world champion curler Jeff Stoughton, who curls out of the Eric Coy rink, or the thousands of kids who played for the Charleswood Hawks and Rangers hockey teams, or the Charleswood Broncos football team or the Oak Park High School Raiders.

I wish to thank the Charleswood Historical Society for reminding all of us of our proud heritage. Happy 100 years, Charleswood: Go Broncos, go Hawks, go Rangers, go Oak Park Raiders.

*Statements by Members*

●(1105)

*[Translation]***FRANCE DEMERS**

**Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of recognizing the work of Ms. France Demers, from Magog. She was named woman farmer of the year by the Fédération des agricultrices du Québec. Her farm, Ferme Magolait, is a large dairy farm in my riding of Brome—Missisquoi.

Ms. Demers, who has four children, has become an expert in work-life balance over the years. Despite having a very busy schedule, the whole family is involved in various activities. Family members participate in several regional competitions in the Eastern Townships.

Through her dedication and hard work, Ms. Demers has become a role model for other Canadian farmers.

It is precisely to help businesses like Farm Magolait that the government should establish as soon as possible a national strategy to promote local food production.

I call on the House to support this bill on local foods.

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*[English]***CANADIAN FORCES**

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as November 11 approaches, I rise to remember 41 brave women and men from CFB Petawawa who made the supreme personal sacrifice for their country as members of the mission to Afghanistan.

Lest we forget, it was the decision of the previous government to play politics with military procurement. The short-sighted cancellation of the Sea King helicopter replacement contract led to many preventable casualties. Forcing our soldiers onto roads mined with bombs and improvised explosive devices caused precious Canadian blood to be spilt. Only after our Conservative government provided the right equipment, heavy-lift Chinook helicopters, did casualty levels drop.

Lest we forget, the opposition continues to play politics with military procurement. Come next election, we will remember.

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**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about crime. That is why our government is taking action to keep our streets and communities safe. We have already passed over 30 measures to crack down on criminals. However, there is still much work to be done.

The number of sexual assaults in Regina has gone up by 17.3% over the last year and homicides have gone up by a shocking 50%. There is clearly much more work to be done.

We committed, in the Speech from the Throne, to end the misguided practice of automatically releasing serious offenders early and we committed to making life sentences mean life behind bars.

I call on the NDP and the Liberals to support these common sense measures to help us keep Canadians safe.

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*[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL IN ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE**

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, nobody can deny that the international film festival in Abitibi-Témiscamingue makes a tremendous contribution to forging Quebec's cultural identity.

For the past 31 years, this film festival has been everything a film festival should be and more. It has helped launch many artistic events, making Rouyn-Noranda the Canadian cultural capital it is today.

This evening, the curtain will close on the 32nd edition, remarkable for the many films spotlighting artists from Abitibi-Témiscamingue, including children of the festival itself: technicians, screenwriters, actors, producers, and teachers who discovered the world of film thanks to this festival.

That is why I would like to congratulate the festival's many volunteers and partners. I would also like to thank the founding presidents, Jacques Matte, Guy Parent, and Louis Dallaire, for their outstanding contribution to raising Abitibi-Témiscamingue's profile.

Enjoy the show.

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●(1110)

*[English]***SEALING INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are proud to support the seal hunt. Obviously, there is a group of misinformed American chefs attacking our seafood industry as a whole.

I would like to congratulate American chef Anthony Bourdain for his interventions on behalf of the rural and coastal communities that rely on the seal hunt.

I would also like to thank chef Michael Smith from P.E.I. and chef Dave McMillan from Montreal for calling out these American chefs on their hypocrisy. I invite any of these American chefs to actually come to Canada to experience the hunt first-hand.

Fresh local food, anywhere in the world, prepared the way locals eat it, is always good. Obviously, some chefs should broaden their horizons and their palates.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**PROSTATE CANCER**

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is nearly November and along with the colder weather come the well-known Movember moustaches. This masculine facial adornment made famous by people like Lanny McDonald, Pat Burns, and, of course, Jack Layton now serves as the icon of November, as part of the Movember campaign. The purpose of this growing campaign is to make people aware of prostate cancer and raise money to find a cure for this horrible disease.

[English]

Once again this year, I have the honour and pleasure of being the captain of the NDP team, the New “DeMOcrats”. Not only fun and entertaining, Movember more importantly helps start a conversation about a topic that is still taboo for some men, our health.

We suffered a tragedy when we lost one of Canada's most famous moustaches, our dear Jack. However, his fight against prostate cancer inspired us and motivated us to participate in Movember campaigns year after year.

I encourage all members and indeed all Canadians to do the same.

[Translation]

Through your participation, we will change the face of men's health, one moustache at a time. Let's go.

\* \* \*

[English]

**LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since the Liberal leader took on his new role six months ago, he has announced only one concrete policy he has for Canada, his plan to legalize marijuana.

In contrast, our Conservative government has been getting things done for Canadians. We have signed the biggest free trade deal since NAFTA, begun efforts to provide more fairness and competition for consumers, and maintained our focus on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

We are opening the market for 500 million new consumers. While we have been focused on the economy and opening those markets, the Liberal leader has been focused on legalizing street drugs. His plan will make drugs easily available to our children, something our government will prevent.

Our Prime Minister will keep illegal drugs off the streets. Clearly, the leader of the Liberal Party is way over his head.

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**GUELPH CURLING CLUB**

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Guelph Curling Club, which is celebrating a very important anniversary. Predating Confederation, for 175 years the club has embodied the values of healthy competition, good sportsmanship, and community engagement.

Over the course of its many years, members of this club have not just “hurried hard” from end to end, but have contributed to the continuous growth of the popularity of this sport across the city, indeed, across the country.

The Guelph Curling Club is the second-oldest curling club in Ontario and has a proud tradition of producing some of the finest curlers, including the men and women in Evan Macdonald's iconic painting, *Curling on Speed River*.

Since making its way across the ocean with the great Scots who invented it, curling has been a familiar exercise in community bonding and activity. The Guelph Curling Club is no exception, with its longtime tradition of giving to the community.

Parliamentarians of the House applaud all the members and staff who have made 175 years of curling at this club a possibility, as well as the board of directors that manages it so well.

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**LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government prioritizes safe streets and communities for Canadian families. Unfortunately, the leader of the Liberal Party prioritizes legalizing marijuana above everything else.

Families in my community were shocked to hear that the leader of the third party made as his first and his only policy declaration that he wanted to make it easier for children to access illegal drugs. He pointed to the example in the regulation of alcohol being available as why pot should be legalized.

Parents in my community see through the Liberal leader's rhetoric, and we know that teens are twice as likely to consume alcohol in the past year as pot. Regulating rules for alcohol did not prevent teens from accessing it.

By sending this message that recreational drug use is acceptable, the Liberal leader is showing once again that he is not material for prime minister of our country and that he is definitely way in over his head.

\* \* \*

●(1115)

[Translation]

**LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE PARTIES OF CANADA**

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, how better to end the parliamentary week than with a quiz for everyone, even the people watching at home?

Who am I?

I dipped into taxpayers' money to make party friends richer. I used government resources to get around the system. In fact, I used government resources to build a culture of corruption within the state. I tried to hide the truth by dodging the issues and making up wild stories. I refused to tell the truth when I was asked questions and, even though everyone is talking about it, strangely enough, no one has taken responsibility for my existence but one or two scapegoats.

### Oral Questions

Who am I, the Conservative Senate expenses scandal or the Liberal sponsorship scandal? The answer is both. Canadians deserve better. They deserve better than to have Liberal corruption replaced by Conservative corruption.

The Conservatives chose to dress up as Liberals for Halloween, accessorizing with a scandal. Canadians can see what lies behind the masks of the two old parties.

There is a bad smell in Ottawa. The NDP is going to clean up.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today on Halloween Canadians are calling on us to put a stop to the tricky antics of the opposition parties.

While the NDP continues to want the very scary carbon tax, which would raise pumpkin prices and suck money out of the pockets of Canadians, the Liberal leader is even more spooky. He has a treat for potheads in his plan for legalizing marijuana, very scary; no plan for the economy, very scary; no plan for victims of crime, very scary; no plan for consumers, very scary. Canadians are not tricked. However, the scariest thing about the spooky Liberal leader, which even the count is afraid of, is that he has no plans for Canada; very, very scary.

While opposition parties trick Canadians with vampire treats, our Conservative government is driving a stake through the heart of the recession with our economic action plan and the Canada-EU trade agreement. Happy Halloween.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### ETHICS

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I remember someone once saying that when someone is under the kind of cloud the Prime Minister admits his government is under, I would think they would use every opportunity to be as forthright as possible.

Who said that? Oh, that was the Prime Minister. However, that was back when the Conservatives thought that telling the truth actually mattered to Canadians.

Today is another day of questions. Will it be another day of changing stories? Is the Prime Minister aware of any other cheques from Nigel Wright to Mike Duffy? It is a simple question. How about a simple answer?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me just begin by saying “Happy Halloween”. Tonight is a night when kids will be all over the place. Hopefully everyone will help out. If people have somewhere to go, they should drive a little slower and take a little extra time so we do not have anything happen that will make this a bad day. I hope everyone will consider that.

With respect to the question, we have been clear. Our party is no different from other parties when it comes to helping our members who require legal assistance. We do that unlike the NDP, of course, which not only provides legal assistance but actually pays judgments against those members. We do not have that double standard on this side of the House.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I remember a Prime Minister once saying, “If you are throwing mud, you are losing ground.” Wait, that was just last week.

I have a better expression for the Conservatives, “When you are in a hole, stop digging.” These guys went out and bought a bigger shovel.

Let us start again. The Prime Minister said that a few people in his office were aware of the cheque from Nigel Wright to Mike Duffy. Please tell us how many people in the Prime Minister's Office were aware of the second cheque, the one to pay Mike Duffy's legal expenses.

• (1120)

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again I will refer the hon. member to affidavits recently filed in court.

However, while I have the floor I will also mention the fact that again today we see that the Canadian economy grew by over 2% annually. That is really good news for the Canadian economy.

When they talk about shovelling and talk about digging, of course the opposition members keep digging into this because they know they do not want to talk about the things that Canadians are concerned about: jobs, growth and safe communities. If they talk about that, they know they will be on the wrong side of Canadians.

It is this party that is on the right side of Canadians. It is this party that will continue to work to grow the economy and create jobs, even if the opposition gets in the way all the time. Canadians can count on us to focus on the economy.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, only this party and this member would think that a Prime Minister not coming clean with Canadians somehow was not important to Canadians.

We believe this to be important to the nation. The issue is Conservative involvement in a cover-up to pay off Mike Duffy and buy his silence. This is just like when the Liberals were mired in the sponsorship scandal. Paul Martin's strategy was to not answer direct questions from the opposition. How did that work out for Paul Martin and the Liberals down the way?

Let us try again. Nigel Wright has been interviewed by the RCMP. Can the government tell us, when was the last time the Prime Minister had a conversation with Nigel Wright?

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this, coming from a party that actually wanted to have a coalition government with the Liberals. The NDP wanted six seats in the Liberal cabinet.

Now, all of a sudden, the Liberals are the worst party ever, but the NDP was ready at one point to set aside what Canadians wanted, when they voted us into office, and to form a coalition government with the Liberals. Wow. It is all over the place. It is trick or treat all day; trick and treat, both of them together.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is actually a very simple question. The parliamentary secretary has to know: when did the Prime Minister last speak to Nigel Wright?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, clearly what is happening here is that they have nothing to talk about.

The NDP members do not want to talk about the fact that the Canadian economy continues to grow. They do not want to talk about the fact that we have opened Canada to a market of 500 million new consumers. They do not want to talk about the fact that we are focused on community safety.

They do not want to talk about the great work of our Minister of National Defence who is providing our troops with the equipment they need to get the job done. They do not want to talk about the fact that our Minister of Natural Resources is opening up new markets for our resources. They do not want to talk about the fact that the Minister of Finance is seeing our deficit reduced by an additional \$7 billion and we are on track to a balanced budget.

They want to talk about the fact that they want to protect these senators. We do not. We are on the side of Canadians. We want them suspended without pay.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has repeatedly changed his story about how many of his employees knew about the scandal. It started out being just Nigel Wright, but now he is saying that several people knew.

Exactly how many people in the Prime Minister's Office were aware of the cheque or cheques that bought Mr. Duffy's silence?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I refer the hon. member to affidavits that were recently filed in court.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since February the Prime Minister's senior insiders have been up to their necks in a scheme to cover up the wrongdoing and public embarrassment of Mike Duffy. The government has said that paying \$90,000 in hush money was wrong but paying \$13,000 in legal fees for negotiating that hush money was okay. There would have to have been an itemized invoice for the services rendered by Duffy's lawyer

to show in detail what he did to earn the \$13,000. When will the government table that itemized invoice?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, hearing this member talk about government accountability is really odd. The member was part of a cabinet that funnelled important government advertising money into the Liberal Party. Apparently, he did not know anything about it and the Liberal prime minister at the time did not know anything about it. Rather, it was all the public works minister, a public works minister who had the time to also cut a cheque for a Liberal cabinet minister to cover the expenses of his son's wedding. The Liberals liked him so much they elevated him from an honourable to an excellency by sending him to Denmark.

Give me a break. They have nothing to teach anyone on ethics and accountability.

• (1125)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative cover-up began in February. Along the way it involved Wright, van Hemmen, Woodcock, Perrin, Hamilton, Byrne, LeBreton, Tkachuk, Stewart Olsen, Gerstein, Novak and others. The Prime Minister meets with these people almost every day and somehow he never noticed, they never told him and he never asked about a scheme in their inner sanctum involving potentially illegal conduct. Among these players, who gave the order to sandbag Deloitte's audit and corrupt a Senate proceeding, and is he or she still on the public payroll?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, hearing the Liberals talk about ethics is like watching a snake come out of its skin. The snake will come out looking all shiny and new, but it is really the same dangerous snake it was before. That is what the Liberals are. They are standing in the way of ethics and accountability in the Senate. Their senators need to get out of the way and let the Senate pass this motion so that we can strip these senators of their pay. That is the level of accountability Canadians want. Only the Liberals and the NDP support these senators and are trying to make victims out of these people who took from Canadians.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, any delay in the Senate is entirely the responsibility of the Conservative leader in the Senate and the PMO that is pulling his strings.

It stands to Mike Duffy's great discredit that he lied to Canadians about the source of the hush money. It is an even greater discredit if someone in the Prime Minister's Office actually counselled Duffy to tell that lie. That is what he said, that the PMO told him to lie on national television.

Will the Prime Minister make all staff available to testify under oath to contradict Duffy or is Duffy now telling the truth?

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there go the Liberals supporting Senator Duffy and these disgraced senators.

Recently the new Liberal finance critic was on a panel with the Liberal leader and she talked about the fact that she was worried that today's job prospects are not about how smart or educated one is but have more to do with what one's father did. I know she was not talking about me because my dad was a really great hairdresser, he was a great pizza maker and I am not that talented. I wonder who she could be talking about. I will have to ask the Liberal leader who he thinks she was talking about when he makes it back into the House. Who could be—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday, the Prime Minister said, "...on our side there is one person responsible for this deception, and that person is Mr. Wright...".

Then, just a few days ago, after months of people asking questions, the Prime Minister finally dropped his flimsy story and admitted that a few people in his office were aware of the scheme.

That being the case, why, last Tuesday, did he once again say that Nigel Wright acted alone, even though that theory has long since been debunked?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on February 13, when he was approached by Mike Duffy to try to justify his inappropriate expenses, the Prime Minister told him to repay those inappropriate expenses that he did not earn.

Mr. Duffy went on TV and then said that he made those payments by taking out a loan at the Royal Bank. We subsequently, obviously, found out that it was not true, that Nigel Wright did that. Nigel Wright has taken sole and full responsibility. He knows that what he did was wrong, and he is prepared to accept accountability.

We have a motion in the Senate right now, and we hope that the senators will pass the motion that would strip these individuals of their pay, because that is what Canadians want, and that is what the vast majority of this caucus wants.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, here is another inconsistency in the Prime Minister's story. He said that he had received assurances that Mike Duffy would repay the expenses himself. However, on Thursday, he said that it was Mr. Duffy himself who announced on national TV that he had repaid his expenses.

When the Prime Minister said that he had received assurances that Mr. Duffy would repay his expenses, who gave him those assurances? Was it Mike Duffy on TV? Was it Mike Duffy during a private meeting? Was it Nigel Wright? Who was it?

• (1130)

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Mike Duffy went on TV and told Canadians that he repaid his expenses by taking out a mortgage on his home. I note that the opposition, I do not think, asked any questions about this until May 15, when it was reported, and we all knew, that that was not actually the case. That was wrong. It was wrong for Nigel Wright to have made that payment on his behalf, and it is wrong right now that Mr. Duffy will not accept responsibility for what he has done.

We are going to extract that responsibility, hopefully by passing this motion in the Senate, and the Senate can get to the motion and pass it, and we will do what Canadians want: accountability for the senators, nothing less.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have to ask again. We still do not have a clear picture of who said what to whom and who did not tell the truth to whom.

The Prime Minister seems to be saying he found out how Mike Duffy repaid his expenses when Mr. Duffy went on TV.

Is the Prime Minister accusing Nigel Wright of lying to him?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, Senator Duffy went on TV and told Canadians that he took out a loan on his home and repaid his expenses.

We are not talking about the leader of the NDP here, who waited 17 years to talk about the fact that he was offered a bribe and then was not sure if he was or was not. Then, of course, he admitted that yes, he was offered a bribe. Imagine what we could have saved the people of Quebec if only the Leader of the Opposition, 17 years ago, would have told police that he was offered an illegal bribe. That is shameful.

On this side of the House, we demand accountability. We have a motion before the Senate right now to do what Canadians want: get accountability from the Senate. The Liberals in the Senate need to get out of the way and let us pass that motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we refuse brown envelopes. On the other side, they hand them out. That is the difference.

The Prime Minister is playing innocent—poor thing—when he says that it is unacceptable that Mr. Duffy misled him about the source of his repayment.

However, if that is so unacceptable, why was it the staffers in his office who suggested this ridiculous fabrication to Mike Duffy and these lies to journalists? Why?



*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is coming from a member, who, on Monday, thought it was funny that he made 29 separate donations to a party that wants to destroy Canada. He somehow thinks that is funny.

*[Translation]*

On this side of the House there are Conservative members from Quebec. They are proud to be Canadians and proud to be Quebecers. They work tirelessly towards a stronger Canada and a stronger Quebec. It is too bad that the member does not share the same pride.

*[English]*

If he did have that same pride, he would help us build a bigger, better, stronger, safer Canada instead of trying to tear it apart.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have to make a confession. I also tell stories to my children in the evening to help them sleep. However, I certainly do not do that in the House of Commons.

This weekend in Calgary, the Reform base out west will really be thrilled to see the gang opposite showing the same attitudes and behaviours as the Liberals during the sponsorship scandal.

I will try a simple question: did Chris Woodcock say to lie about the source of the \$90,000 to Mike Duffy? Did he say that, yes or no?

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, he is talking about his Liberal partners, of course, who wanted to get into a coalition with them, and maybe get a cabinet seat for himself.

I will tell you what is frightening, Mr. Speaker. What is frightening is this: he actually wants to separate and destroy Canada. He wants to talk about an issue that has devastated the Quebec economy and has torn apart families in Quebec. No one in Quebec wants to talk about that. They want to talk about building a bigger, better, stronger, safer Canada. They want to talk about jobs and the economy. Only this member continues to harbour the belief that separation is a good thing. That is why he has provided 29 separate donations. That is what is scary.

I hope his children do not understand the fact that he wants to separate Canada from Quebec, because that would certainly be scary.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on the weekend in Calgary, will there be a panel to provide an historical perspective of a time when the bunch opposite still had principles, perhaps with videos of the good old days when the Conservatives could talk about ethics without making the entire country roar with laughter?

Mike Duffy might well be a crook, but at least he is submitting documents, facts. He is putting something out on the table, which the Prime Minister has not done.

If the Conservatives want to contradict him, they should follow suit.

Will the Conservative publicly release all the emails between Nigel Wright and Mike Duffy? Will they put them out on the table?

● (1135)

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad he mentions the Calgary convention. I cannot tell the House how excited I am to be in Calgary with the grassroots of this party, whose policies and advice have helped us make Canada the best country in the world in which to live, who have helped shape our policies to help guide us through this second economic downturn.

It is the grassroots of this party who have also been instrumental in helping build this country. That is why I am excited to go to Calgary. I am excited to be in Calgary with these grassroots, because they know that building a bigger, better, stronger, safer Canada is better for all of us, unlike that member who continues to try to tear it apart

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it has been five months since Canadians learned about the secret deal between Mike Duffy and Nigel Wright. We learned in May that there was one cheque. Then in the past week, we learned that there was a second cheque, from Conservative Party donors, to cover off Mike Duffy's legal fees.

Does the government know how many cheques Mike Duffy received and how many cheques were handled by the Prime Minister's Office? It should be a simple question to answer.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said on a number of occasions, on occasion, this party does provide legal assistance for the members of its caucus, if it is required. It does not change the fact that what Mike Duffy did in accepting expenses that he did not earn was wrong. It does not change the fact that Nigel Wright, in paying those expenses, was wrong. The Prime Minister stated on a number of occasions that had he known, he would have in no way accepted this particular scheme.

Right now, we have a motion in front of the Senate that would give us accountability for these actions. It is only the Liberals and the NDP that are trying to make victims out of these three senators and disgraced former Liberal Senator Mac Harb.

We are on the side of Canadian taxpayers. That is where we are comfortable, and that is where we will always be.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it was not all that difficult a question. How many cheques were there?

Let us try a quote from the Prime Minister when he was taking on Liberal corruption. He said:

*Oral Questions*

My difficulty with the prime minister at this point...is that I don't think that he's been...honest on fairly simple questions when there appear to be contradictions. [...] when somebody doesn't answer questions...in a straightforward manner, there may be something else.

Let us talk about that “something else”. Will the government tell us when the Prime Minister last spoke to Arthur Hamilton to find out the nature of Mike Duffy's legal fees and whether it was appropriate to use the money of Conservative donors?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, talk about flip-flopping all over the place. No wonder my daughters do not like clowns.

This is the party that wanted to actually form a coalition with the Liberals. They now call them very corrupt and an awful party, but as long as they give them six cabinet seats, they will be okay with them. Give me a break.

This is about Nigel Wright paying off the debts that Mike Duffy did not incur. It is time for some accountability in the Senate. We have made great progress on that. The Liberals in the Senate need to get out of the way so that the senators can pass this motion so that we can get that accountability Canadians want.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on Halloween, I am sure his daughters are going to have a wonderful time, and my daughters are wonderful too, but I would never use them to hide behind corruption.

Let us find out why they are not being forthright. Is it because the Prime Minister told his base that he would clean up Ottawa, that instead he took the cushy Conservative insiders and gave them lifetime appointments, that he sat on a cover-up in his own office, and that he allowed these Conservative to break all the rules?

What happened to that man who promised Canadians that he would make a better country and clean up the corruption of Ottawa? What happened to that man?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will tell members what happened to that man. He has been in this chamber and the head of a government that has created a million new jobs for Canadians. He is opening up new markets and has signed one of the biggest trade deals in Canadian history, opening up a market of 500 million people to Canadian consumers. He is making our communities safer. He is re-equipping our armed forces. He has respect for the Canadian taxpayers. He reduced GST from 7% to 6% to 5%.

While they talk about the middle class and vote against it constantly, we support the middle class and support accountability. That is what this Prime Minister is all about: the Canadian people.

• (1140)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister still refuses to take any responsibility for his senior staff. His senior staff gave \$90,000 to Senator Duffy. His personal lawyer in the PMO oversaw that. His PMO staffer, Chris Woodcock, invented the lie about the source of the Duffy funds. In May, the Prime Minister stood by Nigel Wright, and now he throws him violently under the bus.

In light of the facts, how can the Prime Minister accept absolutely no personal responsibility for this abuse of the public trust?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that member, sitting in a caucus surrounded by people who owe hundreds of thousands of dollars in unpaid leadership debt, could perhaps help us with that form of accountability by working to get them to repay those illegal debts. That would be a good start for the Liberals. Perhaps they could also inform their senators to get out of the way so that we can get real accountability for our senators.

What Mike Duffy did was wrong. What Senator Wallin did was wrong. What disgraced Liberal Senator Mac Harb did was wrong, and the Canadian people want accountability. The Liberals in the Senate need to get out of the way so we can get that accountability.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has in his possession a document that Canadians have yet to see that would help answer many questions.

Arthur Hamilton's invoice should itemize all of the work he did for the Prime Minister's Office. We know that he helped the PMO cover up this scandal.

Will the Prime Minister release that invoice so that we can see the details of the agreement with his office?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as we have said from the outset, we will continue to co-operate any way we are asked.

Ultimately, what we are talking about here is the fact that these senators claimed expenses that they were not entitled to. They were not entitled to that. Right now before the Senate there is a motion that would extract accountability from these senators. I ask myself, “What would Eugene do in this case?” I know what Eugene would do. He would apologize. He would resign, and he would pay it back. It is only the Liberals and the NDP who think it is okay to cheat Canadians and still collect a paycheque. We do not.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has stated for months that no documents existed outlining the cover-up taking place in his own office. We now know that was not true, because Senator Duffy has made public documents and emails directly contradicting the Prime Minister. It is a sad day when Canadians have to learn more from Mike Duffy in eight days than from the Prime Minister in eight months. No wonder nobody believes the Prime Minister anymore.

*Oral Questions*

Will the government make public the remaining documents, or will it wait for Senator Duffy to do so?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can tell members what a sad day is. It is a sad day when the Liberals continue to stand up for these disgraced senators. That is what a sad day is. They are now trying to make a victim out of Senator Duffy.

Senator Duffy is trying to convince Canadians that somehow he was forced to accept \$90,000. He did not want to do it. It was his assistant's fault that he claimed a per diem while he was out in Puerto Vallarta or wherever, perhaps meeting with the former Liberal senator from Puerto Vallarta. Who knows? It was his fault. It was everybody's fault but his, and now the Liberals are standing up for him. That is what is a real disgrace.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Defence shamefully failed to explain why yet another seriously injured Canadian soldier is being forced out of the military just shy of qualifying for his pension.

In fact, over 1,000 CF members have been forced out in this way in the past five years. The minister totally avoided the fact that they are being forced out of the military against their will. Corporal David Hawkins told the military he was not ready to leave.

Why is the minister standing by while this soldier is being forced out?

• (1145)

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we certainly want to thank Corporal Hawkins for his service and sacrifice for Canada.

As I indicated to the hon. member and to the House, members of the Canadian Forces work with military individuals on a transition plan, and no members are released until they are prepared to do so.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to duck and weave. What a complete lack of class.

Canadian soldiers serve their country with the utmost courage. They certainly should not have to fight their own government to have the right to be treated with dignity when they come home injured.

Will the minister immediately reinstate Corporal Hawkins and ensure that no injured soldiers will be forced out and fired without a pension? Yes or no?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would point out to this member that ill and injured Canadian Forces members are provided with physical, mental and occupational therapy services for their eventual transition to civilian life. I am proud to be a member of a government that has done more than any other government in Canadian history to support our men

and women in uniform and to support our veterans. I am very proud of that.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**PENSIONS**

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this summer the Minister of Finance did not keep his promise to improve the Canada pension plan.

Tomorrow, provincial and territorial leaders will meet in an attempt to find a way to overcome the barriers put up by the Minister of Finance.

Instead of standing in the way, could the Minister of Finance show some leadership and table a plan to improve the Canada pension plan and the Quebec pension plan so that Canada's seniors can enjoy security in their well-deserved retirement?

[*English*]

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada pension plan reforms continue to be examined by us and provincial governments. It is a topic of conversation between us and our provincial and territorial counterparts. However, we and many provinces share the concerns of small business and others of increasing costs during a fragile global recovery. We are working on this issue.

**Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, between 2010 and 2036 the number of seniors in Canada will double, and Canadians are facing a crisis of retirement insecurity.

The provinces are in agreement that increasing the Canada pension plan is the very best way to ensure that Canadian seniors will have a secure retirement; so when will the minister stop putting up roadblocks and start working with her provincial colleagues on a concrete proposal to boost CPP rates?

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned already in response, this is an active topic of conversation between our government and our provincial and territorial counterparts. There are concerns, many that have been raised by small business and others, with increasing costs during a time when our global economy is still fragile.

However, we are very proud of our record and our economic recovery since the recession: a million net new jobs in Canada, most being full time. We are on track and we are on record as heading toward a balanced budget in 2015. CPP is one of those issues we continue to deal with.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal member for Malpeque and the NDP member for Vancouver East met to support convicted drug dealer Marc Emery.

This individual is serving a serious sentence in the United States for selling drugs online where anyone can access them. Criminal acts like these put our children at risk, yet the opposition members cannot stop their support for the drug trade.

*Oral Questions*

Can the government tell this House what has been done to keep Canada safe from criminals?

• (1150)

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for that question and her work to make our communities safer.

Our Conservative government has increased sentences for serious drug crimes, such as selling drugs near schools. We have been clear that drug dealers will face the full force of the law. We are unlike the leader of the Liberal Party, whose only policy is supporting the drug trade. We will focus our efforts on standing up for victims and keeping our streets and communities safe.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Development said again yesterday that he was proud that his government has decided to restrict access to abortion services for victims of war rape. He said he is also proud that the chief executive of Rio Tinto is playing such a key role in foreign aid.

I would like to tell the House what would really make Canadians proud: seeing Canada fight poverty and stand up for women.

When will the minister get his priorities straight?

[English]

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada will continue to deliver real results by focusing on areas where Canada has world-leading expertise. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Canada is recognized around the world as a leader in defending the health and safety of mothers and children, particularly girls. We will continue the leadership of the Muskoka initiative because what matters most are results, and that is what we are delivering.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government's position makes no sense. Instead of being proud of the impact of Canadian aid, it is proud to refuse funding for safe abortion services for survivors of rape. It is proud to cut funding for the world's poorest while giving—get this—mining executives exclusive access to influence the government's agenda.

Instead of blindly defending the government's shortsighted decisions, why does the group of people here, who are entrusted with our foreign policy, not actually look at the world's poorest and deal with that issue instead of its foreign policy that is misdirected?

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is always looking for ways to maximize the effectiveness of our development and humanitarian assistance. Our work ensures that Canada stays at the forefront of development policy in an ever-changing world. Because of the Prime Minister's leadership, the hard work and results that we have achieved, Canada is admired around the world, and our government will not stop taking expertise from all

players to ensure that we continue to deliver results both for Canadians and for our development partners.

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**STEEL INDUSTRY**

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, to save jobs at the former Stelco, all the Conservatives needed to do was enforce the agreement that they themselves had signed under the Investment Canada Act, an agreement U.S. Steel had signed to maintain jobs in Canada. Instead of standing up to U.S. Steel and insisting it honour the promises it made, the Conservatives rolled over and settled out of court.

Can the minister explain why his government refuses to stand up for Hamilton? Why did it settle out of court?

**Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of State (Science and Technology, and Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us break down the NDP members' convoluted position on protecting jobs in the steel industry. Steel makes pipelines. They reject the Keystone pipeline. Steel makes heavy machinery and fabrication for mining and forestry. Their leader referred to these sectors as a disease. They should quit fooling themselves and their constituents and support the Keystone pipeline and responsible resource development for the sake of jobs in the steel industry.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, like the industry minister himself, this minister too does not know what he is talking about. Yesterday, when I asked why he would not stand up to U.S. Steel and demand it honour the promises made to workers in Hamilton, he replied too that if the NDP supported pipelines, we would have saved jobs there. He cannot be serious. As the minister responsible knows only too well, U.S. Steel does not make anything to do with pipelines in Hamilton.

Instead of responding to serious questions with partisan smears, why does the minister not learn this file and start standing up for steelworkers rather than insulting them?

• (1155)

**Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of State (Science and Technology, and Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday, U.S. Steel reported a third-quarter loss of \$1.79 billion. Its revenue fell 11%. Unfortunately, it had to make a difficult business decision.

However, the hypocrisy of the NDP is incredible. It claims it wants to stand up for steel workers. Do members know that among the products made by U.S. Steel, in Hamilton, are pipelines for oil and gas? Members can guess who does not want to build those pipelines, across any sector. It is the NDP. They check the record.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are tossing out our wounded soldiers just as they are about to qualify for their pensions. Just as insulting, some 20,000 veterans have been denied funeral assistance from the Last Post Fund.

Now we learn that last year, the Conservatives cut this burial fund by 22%. Meanwhile, the PMO budget increased by 7%.

Why are the Conservatives increasing spending in the PMO while they slash support for our veterans?

[English]

**Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has made substantial investments to support Canada's veterans, including almost \$5 billion in new additional dollars since taking office.

This funding has been put toward improved financial benefits, world-class rehabilitation, and tuition costs to help veterans transition to civilian life. While our government is making improvements in veterans' benefits, it is the Liberals and the NDP who are voting against new funding for mental health treatment, financial support and home care services, such as lawn cutting, snow shovelling, and cleaning homes.

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, here are the facts.

The Conservatives routinely fire wounded soldiers when they are just about to qualify for their pension.

In another insult, 20,000 veterans have been rejected for help for their funerals under the Last Post Fund. Now we learn that the Conservatives cut this burial fund by 22% last year.

Meanwhile, spending for the PMO has increased by 7%.

Why are the Conservatives expanding the PMO while they slash support for our veterans?

**Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has a strong record when it comes to providing the benefits and the services for Canada's veterans. We have created more than 600 points of service access for our veterans. We have doubled the funeral burial services benefit. We will continue to stand up for Canada's veterans. It is the NDP and the Liberals who have voted against virtually every single benefit we have brought forward to help our veterans. I would encourage them to support the government and support Canada's veterans.

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**HOUSING**

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, two low-income families that received support from the Native People of Sudbury Development Corporation will be forced from their homes, through the fault of the current government. The subsidy provided by the federal housing program is ending. In the next two years, as many as 900 other families in my riding alone will be put in the same position.

Would the government work with this group in Sudbury to prevent this tragedy from happening?

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are committed to helping vulnerable Canadians to become self-sufficient and to fully participate in our economy.

In fact, budget 2013 renewed our commitment to affordable housing, with our agreement for investment in affordable housing.

Every year, together with our partners, we have helped over 880,000 individuals and families with subsidized housing.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the worst part is that the minister is acting as though he really cared about first nations.

In 2009, the entire program supported 620,000 households at a cost of \$1.7 billion. After cutting \$100 million, the government still has not decided whether to renew its social housing agreements. That will affect more than 200,000 households.

Will the government protect its operating agreements and prevent the loss of social housing, or will it once again ignore the needs of the most disadvantaged?

● (1200)

[English]

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think the member is confused. She should know that CMHC is providing mortgage subsidies for long-term, 25- to 50-year agreements. Those agreements are coming to an end. There is no cut.

What we have done is renewed our agreements with the provinces for affordable housing. As well, we have renewed our commitment for our homelessness partnering strategy, with a focus on housing first.

On a number of levels, we are working together with partners for affordable housing, for homelessness, and empowering and equipping people so they can get jobs and afford the housing in their area.

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**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government supports Canadian jobs from coast to coast to coast. We understand that developing our resources creates jobs and economic growth across the country.

### Oral Questions

Our message does not change when we are in Canada or abroad. The Liberal leader, however, pits one region against another in an attempt to win votes. Can we believe him when he said, “Canada isn’t doing well right now because it’s Albertans who control our community and socio-democratic agenda”?

Could the Minister of Natural Resources update the House on the work the minister is doing to promote Canada’s natural resources sector?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is running a marathon for Canada. Meanwhile the leader of the Liberals totes up without a semblance of a plan, while the leader of the NDP throws roadblocks in our way and urges on our competitors.

At the finish line, Canadians will know who brought them jobs, economic security, and prosperity as opposed to those who stand on the sidelines or use every tactic in the book to block the path to Canadian success.

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### PENSIONS

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-  
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a story about a gentleman by the name of Bruce Warford. Bruce is an honest guy, an honest taxpayer, and has worked all his life. Now he has applied for CPP disability because through no fault of his own, he is unable to work.

Last year the Conservatives created a Social Security Tribunal, saying that it would be more efficient. Unfortunately, all they have done is created more roadblocks for the average Canadian.

Mr. Warford has now been waiting nearly three years for an answer. My question to the minister is very simple. Mr. Warford wants to know why this is happening to him.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Social Security Tribunals have made it more efficient. The people who are working at Service Canada are making it faster. I do not know about this individual situation. If that member would like to speak with us, maybe he can help his constituent.

The facts will show that the process is working and that these individuals are getting their appeals processed much quicker.

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### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is less than 100 days until the Olympic Games open in Sochi, but Canadians are very concerned about the impact of Russia’s new anti-gay laws.

Russia has already arrested and expelled non-Russians under these so-called “gay propaganda” laws.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs appoint a special consular officer to assist LGBT athletes and spectators in Sochi to ensure that all Canadians can take part, freely and fully, in these Olympic Games?

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has very much made its position very clear in reference to athlete participation in Russia, and the Russian authorities have agreed that nobody will be discriminated against when they go to the Olympics in Russia.

We will keep an eye on it and we will make our representation to the Russian authority should anything else happen.

\* \* \*

### HEALTH

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one in nine women are diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime, making breast cancer the most common type of cancer for women.

While there are many preventive measures women can take to reduce risk, it can be challenging to locate information on prevention.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health please inform the House what our government is doing to support the fight against this terrible disease and reduce the number of women who are affected?

• (1205)

**Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to investing in women’s health, and unfortunately too many Canadian families have had to face this terrible disease.

Our government is committed to investing in prevention strategies so fewer Canadians have to take on the battle against cancer.

That is why yesterday I was delighted to announce significant investments in partnership with the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. This investment builds on the \$1 billion our government has already made in cancer research and prevention since taking office.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, by moving too quickly on their bad employment insurance reform and eliminating benefits for fishers who also work in other sectors, the Conservatives drew the ire of the independent fishermen’s federation in Atlantic Canada. As a result of public pressure, the government has reversed this illogical decision. Thank goodness.

This illustrates what happens when the public is not consulted. Will the Conservatives continue moving in the right direction and scrap employment insurance reform?

[English]

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for reading the budget implementation bill, because three days earlier it seemed as though no one in his caucus had read it. I congratulate the member for reading it and knowing what is in the budget implementation bill.

I want to be clear that the modest and reasonable changes that we have made to EI have not changed the rules around applying and for qualifying for EI. We want to ensure that EI remains there for Canadians who have paid into it and need it when, through no fault of their own, they find themselves without work. We are there for fishermen.

It is too bad the members on that side do not even know what is in the act that could benefit the people in their regions.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### JUSTICE

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court will not consider the case of Justice Nadon—a judge who does not meet the basic criteria and does not live in Quebec but was still recommended by the Conservatives, NDP, and Liberals—until January 15.

However, in less than a month, the Supreme Court will hear the case of the federal government, which claims to be able to make changes to the Senate without Quebec's consent and without three judges from Quebec sitting on that court.

The Minister of Justice must take action. Will he ask that the hearings of the case pertaining to the Senate be postponed until there are three judges from Quebec duly appointed to the Supreme Court?

**Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government will defend the right of long-standing members of the Barreau du Québec to sit on the highest court in the country.

Members of the Barreau du Québec should have the same rights as lawyers from other provinces. That is why we have taken steps to confirm the eligibility criteria for Supreme Court justices. We are eager to resolve this issue and to see Justice Nadon, a highly qualified individual, take his seat in the court.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That concludes question period. The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands on a point of order.

\* \* \*

[English]

### POINTS OF ORDER

#### STANDING ORDER 31

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, this is a recurring issue. You have said in the past that there would be a chance, perhaps, to look at the rules and aid us in the proper use of Standing Order 31.

What I refer to in Standing Order 31 is that the Speaker may order a member to resume his or her seat if, in the opinion of the Speaker, improper use is made of this Standing Order. We do not have much

### Business of the House

more guidance than that. We do know that Speaker Jeanne Sauvé, at the time, spoke of the importance of S. O. 31s, so that members had an unrestricted 60 seconds in which to express their concerns relating to their constituencies.

In today's statements by members, the members for Mississauga—Streetsville, Yukon, and Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke spoke. The hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East was extremely amusing. However, the reality of this is that there is a hijacking of what is supposed to be individual member statements. As the member for Langley pointed out in his point of order last spring, members are increasingly scripted, not speaking of what the concerns are in their ridings.

In this point of order, I do not expect a ruling this moment, but I would like to put it back on the table, asking the Speaker for guidance, that the discretion the Speaker has been used to preclude the use of scripted, partisan, political messages, which do not advance the work in this place.

• (1210)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair will not make a ruling at this point, but will get back to the House as soon as possible.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (House Leader of the Official Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are asking the Thursday question a bit earlier than usual so that our friends from the Conservative Party can go to their convention in Calgary.

The official opposition is giving this government a reprieve from the difficult questions asked by our leader and our caucus because it is tradition to allow our colleagues to go to their convention.

[English]

I have no doubt that the government may face a somewhat restless base of supporters with regard to the questions we have been asking of it these last number of weeks and months.

I will be there too. I look forward to seeing my colleague across the way. I will be watching closely for the Prime Minister's latest version of events in his keynote speech, for which I suspect his good friend, Mayor Ford, will no longer be introducing the Prime Minister.

What I will be looking for is to see which version of events the Prime Minister will be giving that we have been recently engaging in. Is it the Nigel the hero version, Nigel the scoundrel version, Nigel the rogue conspiracy version, Nigel the resigned version, the Nigel "I fired" version, or the Nigel "no one knew except Nigel" version with a dual cheque? I look forward to that.

I also look forward to what the government House leader can let us know about the calendar going ahead into next week.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is the custom in the response to this question to actually answer about the business of the House. That is what I will focus on, rather than the business of our party convention, which I am sure will be a very successful conference. Good things always happen when we get together as a party.

We will conclude this week with the debate on second reading of Bill C-5, the offshore health and safety act.

[*Translation*]

Next week we will focus on families and building our communities. Families are the cornerstone of society. Over the coming weeks and months, our government will continue to support and protect families through a number of important bills.

We will continue to tackle crime, increase support for victims, and ensure communities are kept safe from criminals. We want Canadians to live in safe and healthy communities in which they can raise their children.

[*English*]

Therefore, on Monday, before question period, we will resume the second reading debate on Bill C-2, the respect for communities act. That debate will be continued next Friday.

After question period Monday, we will take up the second reading debate on Bill C-3, the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act.

Wednesday will see us return to the third reading debate on Bill C-7, the Canadian museum of history act.

Tuesday, November 5 shall be the second allotted day, which will go to the Liberals, I understand. This will be an opportunity for the hon. member for Papineau to tell us, and all Canadians, the next plank of his policy vision for Canada. So far, we have seen his penchant for pot, as well as his star economic adviser claiming that someone's job prospects are pre-determined by his father's job. However, we have not heard any economic ideas as yet.

[*Translation*]

Thursday, November 7, shall be the third allotted day, which will see a New Democratic motion considered.

[*English*]

In closing, let me echo the words of the hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East, which I know he scripted himself: happy Halloween.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled “Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of His Majesty The Sultan And Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam for

the Exchange of Information on Tax Matters”, done in Bandar Seri Begawan, May 9, 2013; “Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the British Virgin Islands Under Entrustment from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Island for the Exchange of Information on Tax Matters”, done in London, May 21, 2013; and “Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain for the Exchange of Information on Tax Matters”, done at Ottawa, June 4, 2013.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

\* \* \*

●(1215)

### CONTINUING CARE FOR CANADIANS ACT

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-545, An Act respecting the provision of continuing care to Canadians.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand in the House today to introduce my bill, an act respecting the provision of continuing care to Canadians.

First of all, I would like to thank my colleague, the member of Parliament for Timmins—James Bay, for seconding the bill and for introducing his excellent motion on palliative care.

Palliative care and continuing care are critical issues to Canadians. There is a strong national consensus from academics, health professionals, and the public that we are sadly lacking in a pan-Canadian plan for continuing care, including home care, long-term care, respite care, and palliative care.

That is what the bill is about. It would establish pan-Canadian standards for best practices in continuing care, caregiver support, training, infrastructure, and affordability. It would ensure that the federal government would play a key role in a collaborative process with the provinces and the territories to meet the needs of Canadians who need home care, long-term care, or palliative care in a timely and accessible way.

I am very proud of the work that went into this comprehensive bill. It lays out a clear, achievable, and equitable direction to establish a critical program for continuing care and would ensure funding for continuing care services in Canada.

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

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-546, An Act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (Moonlight Lake and other lakes and rivers).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today in the House to introduce this bill, which would amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act. The Conservatives passed this act, which removed environmental protections from more than 90% of our waterways.



Many of my constituents and my colleague's constituents from Châteauguay—Saint-Constant have written to us asking us to work on protecting many rivers and waterways, including the Trout River, the Châteauguay River and other rivers. They want to be able to continue their ecotourism activities, participate in the activities that keep us in shape and drink the water without worrying about becoming sick.

This is very important to all of our constituents. This summer we participated in an activity with some of them. It is very important for future generations of Canadians to have access to drinking water, access to waterways so they can participate in ecotourism activities and to reap the economic benefits of these activities.

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

• (1220)

**Ms. Françoise Boivin:** Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to move the following motion: That the House concur in the motion adopted by the National Assembly of Quebec on October 29, 2013, and therefore: (a) recognize that the Supreme Court Act stipulates that three of the Supreme Court judges shall be from Quebec and that they shall be appointed from among the judges of the Court of Appeal or of the Superior Court of Quebec or from among practising lawyers who are members of the Barreau du Québec; (b) recognizes that this guarantee preserves Quebec's distinctiveness and civil law tradition and cannot be altered or otherwise modified without the consent of the National Assembly of Quebec; (c) support Quebec's historic position that the three Quebec judges on the Supreme Court should be selected from among the candidates recommended by the Attorney General of Quebec to the federal government; and (d) affirm that three judges from Quebec must be on the Supreme Court when cases that are of major importance to Quebec are heard.

This motion is a response to the fiasco surrounding the latest Supreme Court nomination. It goes without saying that the Supreme Court is the highest court in the land and should be a source of unity for all Canadians, including Quebecers.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**Some hon. member:** No.

\* \* \*

[English]

## PETITIONS

### VIA RAIL

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here from my constituency. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to immediately reverse the funding cuts to VIA Rail, secure the future of passenger rail services through federal legislation and long-term funding for VIA Rail, and invest in a high-speed network to get Canadians to the 21st century in transportation that they deserve.

## Routine Proceedings

### GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of my constituents from Guelph, who are asking for a moratorium on genetically modified alfalfa.

The petitioners are concerned that herbicide-tolerant genetically modified alfalfa requires variety registration before it can be sold as seed in Canada but has already been approved for human consumption and environmental release. The petition states that cross-contamination could be a threat to organic farming systems and to the ability of both organic and conventional farmers to sell alfalfa and related products to domestic and international markets.

The petitioners finally call upon Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa in order to allow a proper review of the impact on farmers in Canada.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition on genetically modified alfalfa from residents of Castlegar, Argenta, Grand Forks, Kaslo, Nelson, and the Slocan Valley. The petitioners are concerned about the fact that this has been approved for release in Canada. If genetically modified alfalfa is released, it will be a devastating hit to organic and conventional farmers because of cross-pollution. Therefore, they call upon the government to institute a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa.

### ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition is a set of hundreds of petitions that add to the thousands already in support of my Bill C-322 and the fact that horses are ordinarily kept and treated as sport and companion animals, are not raised as food-processing animals, and are given strictly prohibited drugs throughout the course of their lifetimes.

The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to amend the Health of Animals Act and Meat Inspection Act and to prohibit the importation or exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption as well as horsemeat products for human consumption.

### FALUN GONG

**Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table a petition on behalf of constituents in my riding of the Yukon calling upon the government to condemn the Chinese Communist Party's crime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, and other measures.

• (1225)

### INCOME TAX DEDUCTIONS FOR TRADESPEOPLE

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, later today the House will begin debate on Bill C-201, which is my private member's bill to allow tradespeople to deduct travel and accommodation expenses from their taxable income so that they can secure and maintain employment at a construction site that is more than 80 kilometres away from their home.

*Routine Proceedings*

In support of this bill, I have been flooded by petitions. I am pleased to table yet another set in the House today. This time the petitioners are from Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario, including Whitby, the hometown of the Minister of Finance. There are literally hundreds of names on the petition, all urging the government to give quick passage to my bill.

I thank the petitioners for their support and I am pleased to be able to table this petition on their behalf.

## PAN-CANADIAN CONCUSSION STRATEGY

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition regarding concussions.

The signatures were collected by two extraordinary young women in my riding, Sandhya and Swapna Mylabathula, who have spent almost three years working on a bill proposal for a pan-Canadian concussion strategy, as concussion can deeply impact individuals psychologically, neuropsychologically, socially, and economically. They also understand we need a national brain strategy.

Those living with concussion deserve comprehensive action and support. The petitioners call upon the government to enact a pan-Canadian concussion awareness week; a pan-Canadian strategy for prevention, diagnosis, and management; and a centre of excellence in concussion research.

## INCOME TAX DEDUCTIONS FOR TRADESPEOPLE

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by many constituents in my riding of Thunder Bay—Rainy River in support of Bill C-201, which is a bill whose sponsor is our hard-working and quite wonderful member from Hamilton Mountain.

This bill will allow tradespeople and indentured apprentices to deduct travel and accommodation expenses from their taxable income so that they can secure and maintain employment at a construction site that is more than 80 kilometres from their home.

[*Translation*]

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition expressing opposition to the bill that was introduced regarding employment insurance. The bill is a direct attack on economic development, seasonal workers and the Canadian economy.

[*English*]

## HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by constituents and other Montrealers for equity and fairness for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

They acknowledge that the Government of Canada has recognized fundamental human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and is providing over \$100 million in capital funding for a national museum for human rights.

Canada has also recognized in legislation the Ukrainian great famine and the internment operations against the Ukrainian

community during the First World War. Therefore, the petitioners are upset that unlike the Holocaust and indigenous suffering, the Holodomor will not be proudly and permanently recognized but rather will be included in a gallery alongside other mass atrocities and will not be given a permanent exhibit. Therefore, they call upon Parliament to ensure that the Holodomor and Canada's first national internment operations are permanently and prominently displayed at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in its galleries.

## ASSISTED SUICIDE

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

The first petition is signed by residents of Kingston, Belleville, Toronto, Courtenay in British Columbia, and within my riding, Salt Spring Island and Brentwood Bay.

The petitioners want the House of Commons to take action on an issue that is frequently in the media but has not been dealt with here in the House. It is a difficult issue. It raises significant moral questions, but it must be dealt with. The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to respect the will of Canadians and come up with strict guidelines and helpful legislation to ensure that Canadians have the right to die with dignity.

## BOTTLED WATER

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the use of bottled water in federal buildings and federal facilities. It is signed by residents from within Saanich—Gulf Islands. The petitioners call upon the federal government to ban the use of bottled water in federal institutions.

## BANGLADESH

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition signed by over 1,300 Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Report after report tells a chilling tale of disguised extrajudicial killings by security forces in order to silence opposition members and political activists. The petitioners are concerned about attacks on religious and ethnic minorities experiencing discrimination. They call for an end to all discrimination and violence from the ruling party. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to convey these concerns directly to the Government of Bangladesh. The petitioners want to ensure that Canada works to improve the situation to make sure that the human rights of all Bangladeshis are promoted and protected.

Finally, I wish to thank all of those who have worked on this petition. Their commitment to human rights makes Canada better.

*Government Orders*

•(1230)

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**[*English*]**OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in debate on Bill C-5. One of the greatest privileges of being a member of this place is the opportunity to create and improve legislation that positively impacts the lives of our fellow Canadians. I believe, in fact, that Bill C-5 is a case in point.

It is not news to Canadians that our country places great economic importance on the development of natural resources. Throughout our history, that has been the case. Forestry products, natural gas, hydroelectricity and oil are cornerstones of our export market and contribute immensely to the creation of jobs for middle-class Canadians. Some of our natural resources are also extracted offshore. In Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador people know the importance this activity has for their economies.

The offshore sector is, of course, the subject of the bill, specifically the occupational health and safety of offshore workers. Mirror legislation has already received royal assent, in fact, in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Nova Scotia. While the bill is quite large, several hundred pages or more, some observers have noted that it primarily lays down in law things that are already happening in practice. Unfortunately, one issue that the bill does not address is recommendation 29 from the Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry led by Commissioner Robert Wells.

The Wells inquiry was established by the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board following the 2009 helicopter crash about 30 nautical miles off of St. John's, Newfoundland. As members may recall, the helicopter was carrying 16 people to work in the offshore fields when it crashed, killing 15 of those workers and the two pilots. Commissioner Wells recommended that a new, independent, stand-alone safety regulator be established to regulate safety in the offshore. In fact, I asked the minister about that idea a little earlier.

The commissioner went on to say that if recommendation 29 was not feasible, a separate and autonomous safety division of the C-NLOPB should be created to deal only with safety matters.

Unfortunately, Bill C-5 does not implement this recommendation in either of the ways the commissioner offered as options. I would urge the Conservative government to see if it can address this fact when the legislation is sent to committee, which I think it will be, and amendments are brought forward. If that cannot be done, perhaps it could bring forward legislation soon, working with the provinces involved, obviously, to deal with this.

As Canadians, we are well aware, of course, of the oil sands. Its production, export and environmental impact colours the discourse of the government every day. It is often talked about here in the House, and these days in the U.S. as well. Lesser known but still valuable is our domestic offshore oil and gas industry operating in the coastal waters of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, even though in Nova Scotia there has been a decline in revenues from the offshore in recent years as the production of gas from existing wells declines and with the relatively low price of gas in North America. In fact, in North America the gas level price is about \$3 whereas in Asia it is between \$14 and \$18, so there is quite a variation. That means that there is a little less interest these days in more costly exploration offshore versus production onshore, as is happening a great deal in the U.S.

The offshore industry in Newfoundland and Labrador produced more than 28 million barrels of oil in 2013. In Nova Scotia, offshore production accounts for a significant portion of the province's annual revenue, although it has been declining. The offshore oil and gas industry provides employment for Canadians and security for their families, for thousands of people. My hon. colleague from South Shore—St. Margaret's, for instance, would know this having worked in the offshore. He would also understand that the primary concern of the industry is its own economic viability and success. Meanwhile, as legislators, it is our responsibility to strike a careful balance between the economic success of Canadian business and the rights of employees, and of course consideration for our environment. There are and must be times when these latter two take precedence.

•(1235)

Bill C-5 is one of the many tools to achieve this. Canada is often referred to as a nation rich in natural resources. We must ask ourselves how we should behave when we are labelled in this way, especially these days when there is so much concern about the impact on the environment of the exploitation of natural resources and when we need to have the social licence, whether it be within our country or beyond our borders in the case of the Keystone XL pipeline that has been proposed for example, when we need to have support elsewhere for what we are doing and a recognition that we are making important efforts and doing everything we can to ensure the environment is protected. I do not think most Canadians believe for a moment that the Conservative government has been doing that.

It seems to me that we should also be striving to set an example for other countries by valuing our human capital as much as we value the wealth we derive from our natural resources. The bill is very much about our human capital as we are thinking about the safety and health of our workers.

### *Government Orders*

The bill will in fact effectively solve the issue of jurisdiction surrounding the occupational and operational health and safety in the Canadian offshore oil and gas industry. That is an important thing to do. It is frustrating that it has taken over 10 years to do that. This process has been under way and we have been discussing it a long time.

Nevertheless, for this reason, because it is achieving this, the Liberal Party supports Bill C-5. We believe we need to move the legislation to committee so that it can be studied, and if necessary improved. We certainly look forward to the opportunity to examine the bill, to hear from experts and to consider possible improvements.

The original offshore accords were signed in the late 1980s by Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia. They were designed to establish guidelines for revenue and responsibility sharing of offshore oil and gas assets. These assets have since proved to be economically rewarding, especially so in Newfoundland and Labrador, and have supported programs beyond the scope of resource extraction.

Bill C-5 seeks to clarify jurisdictional issues that arise between occupational health and safety and operational safety, to create a streamlined process for rectifying health and safety issues and to assign responsibility. We do not want to have any doubt, when there is an accident in the offshore, about whether it is a matter of federal or provincial jurisdiction. We want to know that there will be clear laws, that the courts will know which laws apply, and that nothing falls through the cracks. We want to know that people are protected and that in the worst case scenario, God forbid there is another accident like the helicopter accident, families seeking redress know where to go, what to look for and what laws apply to them. That is obviously important.

The right to a safe workplace is one that all Canadians must enjoy. It is fundamental for all of us. Those of us who work in this place are very fortunate. We have a very safe environment, at least in terms of actual health and safety. I did not say it was secure, especially when elections come along. Nobody here has job security for more than four years or so.

However, we are very fortunate in the kind of work we do in this job. Generally speaking it is pretty good for health and safety. We do not have to engage in the kinds of work that some people in our country do have to engage in. We can think of that television show *Dirty Jobs*. There are many jobs in this world that are dangerous and challenging.

This morning as I left my apartment and walked here, the first thing I saw was a new building under construction across the street. I was thinking about the construction workers and the kinds of things they have to learn to work on a site such as that. There are health and safety things they have to learn to know how to operate in an environment where it can be somewhat dangerous. If they back up the wrong way or take the wrong step, they could be in a big trouble on a construction site with a building that is already 10 storeys high, and as I learned this morning, is going to be 22 storeys. That is the kind of place where people want to be careful.

The right to a safe workplace is something the government should keep in mind as it proceeds also with Bill C-4, the omnibus budget bill.

• (1240)

Though a safe workplace is not the reality for all, through the years, governments and parliamentarians have worked with stakeholder groups to improve the conditions faced by Canadians in their places of employment. That, obviously, is incredibly important work. Bill C-5 is an example of these efforts. In this case they are the efforts of the provincial and federal levels working together, which is nice to see. It is our collective responsibility, whether as a legislative body, employers or employees, or society as a whole, to ensure that the right to a safe work environment is respected. It is absolutely vital.

Conditions for employees on offshore drilling projects should be comparable to those found on land-based projects. There is no question that a drilling rig, whether offshore or onshore, can be a very dangerous environment. My brother at one time worked on offshore oil rigs, and I have certainly heard stories from him about the nature of them and what he had to learn before he could work there, especially if the work was around the equipment that was the most dangerous.

The mode of transportation to their work site should be safe and reliable. Think about the helicopter accident. Employees of the oil and gas sector offshore and their families should be able to leave for work with confidence that they will be returning safely home. They should be able to voice their concerns about unsafe working conditions when they find them without fear of reprisal or the frustration of drawn out and murky processes. It is important that the processes be clear and expedient.

It is our job to transform these topics of concern I have just listed into topics of confidence. Employees and their families can be confident that what is proposed in Bill C-5, as far as it goes, would improve the health and safety regimes of offshore oil and gas projects. It is up to us to decide by how much.

Members of our party believe that we need to ensure the separation of health and safety concerns from those of production and economic viability. They are two different things. We want to make sure that sometimes, when necessary, those health and safety concerns are paramount, as they ought to be.

Bill C-5 should guarantee that the proposed chief safety officer has powerful methods of inquiry to hold operators to account. A regime of self-regulation would be insufficient. I have already said that we do not think that the chief safety officer approach is necessarily ideal. There are others Commissioner Wells recommended, but since that is what we are going with, let us try to make it as strong as possible. The chief safety officer must not be influenced in decision-making by concerns of economic viability or by political pressure, obviously. This individual must be a champion of a healthy and safe environment for all employees who work on offshore oil and gas projects.

The Liberal Party places great emphasis also on search and rescue capabilities, or SAR, as it is called. This is a core element of the health and safety regime in the offshore industry.

*Government Orders*

The spring 2013 report of the Auditor General outlined significant issues regarding search and rescue capabilities, including a complete lack of federal policy in this area. The Attorney General is rightly concerned about the viability of search and rescue capabilities in the coming years and about the risk of leaving employees in the offshore sector with inadequate assistance in the case of major emergencies.

Bill C-5 includes guidelines on the safe transport of workers to and from the offshore site. It should also include a procedure for rescuing these individuals should something go wrong. This should be included in this legislation, it seems to me.

The unique challenges of the offshore oil and gas industry must be met by a complete and thorough plan of response. Bill C-5, as I said earlier, is the product of over a decade of negotiations and consultations among the federal government, the provincial governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, and stakeholder groups. A decade is a long time. Really, it is excessive. I would hope that future negotiations would move more quickly. If the Conservatives, at least while they are the government, will take this seriously and move quickly, along with provinces—

**Mr. Leon Benoit:** For the next 10 years.

**Mr. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague suggested a longer period than I have in mind for their continuation, but I am prepared to leave that to the voters. I hope we all believe in democracy and are prepared to leave it to the voters to work that out for us so that we need not argue about that particular issue here at the moment.

● (1245)

The bill has survived changes in the ruling parties, at both the federal and provincial levels, and more than one change in my province of Nova Scotia. It has received clear provincial support this year, as I understand it. As I said earlier, the legislatures of both Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia have given Bill C-5's mirror legislation assent in short order.

By supporting Bill C-5 and sending it on to committee, we would have the opportunity to improve upon legislation that has already met some of the concerns of the provinces.

If we take into account all the elements of employee health and safety, the original accords and Bill C-5 itself could provide the model for future negotiations between the federal government and other provinces looking to develop offshore oil and gas regulations.

As a group of legislators, we have the responsibility to protect our fellow Canadians as they contribute to developing our economy. We have the responsibility to draw the fine balance between the economic success of business and the concerns of those who raise legitimate issues, as both are so often important concerns. We have responsibility for planning for the future, anticipating issues, and solving them to the best of our ability.

Bill C-5 would take steps toward these goals. That is why I encourage my fellow members to support moving the bill to committee stage. We would have an opportunity to improve upon legislation that has been proposed and that has already garnered support. I look forward to the result.

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed working with my colleague on various committees. I hear that he is moving from the industry committee, which is too bad. We enjoyed working with him.

I have been listening with great interest, because I spent half my life in Nova Scotia, so I understand a lot about the offshore oil and gas industry and the various tragedies we have had there through the decades.

We welcome this act. It would go some way toward addressing the problems that have occurred on the east coast and in other parts of Canada. We look forward to it going to committee.

Does the hon. member think this act would go far enough in addressing the conclusions the Wells commission came up with in its report?

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed working with my hon. friend on the industry committee, so I will miss him there, but I look forward to seeing him here and in other places around this place.

As I said, one of the concerns I have, in particular, is recommendation 29 in the Wells commission report done after the helicopter accident off Newfoundland. It called for a separate organization to look at the question of workers' health and safety. I would hope that we could consider that at committee as a possible amendment, perhaps even from the government side. If not that, I would hope the government would endeavour to work with the provincial governments to ensure that it happens.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recently I was visited by some folks who are concerned about the potential of drilling in the St. Lawrence basin. It would seem to me that on the face of it, Bill C-5 would, in fact, have applicability to that potential drilling.

They raised two issues with me. The first issue was the multiplicity of jurisdictions surrounding the St. Lawrence basin. We can think of Quebec, New Brunswick, St. Pierre and Miquelon, Newfoundland, et cetera, and depending upon where the rig was located, which jurisdiction would apply.

Therefore, the first question is the applicability with respect to Bill C-5.

The second issue has to do with who cleans up when there is a mess made and who would have jurisdiction for that. It seems contradictory. If the federal government is taking jurisdiction over health and safety, why would it not also take jurisdiction with respect to pollution cleanup?

● (1250)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, where this legislation concerns health and safety, I can answer the question as it relates to the issue raised by the group he met with yesterday. I met with them also. They were talking about the Old Harry site, which, as I understand it, is within the zone covered by the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. That is the board that would have responsibility in that area in relation to health and safety.

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This act would apply to accidents. It would also apply if, for instance, a worker brought forward concerns about what was happening about health and safety on the rig they were on. It would not deal with any of the other issues they raised in relation to the way the currents flow in the Saint Lawrence.

A number of provinces, including Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador intersect. People from those areas are all relying on the fisheries in that area, for example.

There are a variety of concerns I am aware of. However, this bill deals not with issues such as cleanup but with the health and safety of workers in the offshore industry.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague and I found his speech very interesting. We are all concerned about workplace safety regulations in all regions of eastern Canada and across Canada.

The bill before us is a step in the right direction. I look forward to hearing the debates that will take place in the parliamentary committees that will examine it if it passes second reading. We hope it will.

I wonder if my colleague could come back to the issue of jurisdictions. The fact that the House of Commons and the National Assembly have not yet adopted an agreement between Quebec and the federal government regarding the Gulf of St. Lawrence is still a problem.

Does he foresee any difficulty in implementing Bill C-5, specifically because we have not yet reached the point where all of the provinces that share the gulf have agreements? I am talking about Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Quebec.

Yes, agreements exist with Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, but three provinces that share the gulf and are entitled to have their own agreements do not have them. Could this create any difficulties regarding the bill currently before us?

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for his question.

It is interesting that he mentioned that there are already agreements and that federal and provincial organizations in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador are working on this issue. This bill was negotiated between the federal government and these two provinces.

However, in cases where there is a disagreement between Quebec or other provinces and the federal government, I would urge the federal government to negotiate with them in order to solve this problem and make sure there are good agreements in place.

The question remains as to whether or not there should be development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Clearly, it would be good if there were agreements and boards as there are in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador to work on this issue.

• (1255)

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, my friend from Halifax West will know that I have been long concerned with the functioning of the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board in particular, in relation to exploration for natural gas in inshore areas, as he mentioned correctly.

The Old Harry site, though, is actually in the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board area and would be the first ever development of petroleum resources inside the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which is one of the most biologically productive areas of Canada's coastline and is uniquely susceptible to threats from oil and gas accidents or disasters because its counter-clockwise current would take any oil around to absolutely all of the provinces in the area, which as he mentioned, is a multi-jurisdictional area, with Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador.

This piece of legislation deals solely with worker safety in the offshore for both the Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia boards. In fact, it is not objectionable, even though it does not go far enough to ensure those workers have an independent safety board. However, when speaking of independence, we have now had the downloading of environmental reviews to these very boards, and they have shown a pattern of consistent bias in favour of developing oil and gas, and in that, they have a conflict of interest when trying to protect the public interest, environmental concerns and the interests of fisheries and fishermen's organizations throughout the region.

I ask my colleague if he thinks the time has come to have a look at these accords and these acts and see if we should separate out regulatory functions from offshore petroleum promotion functions.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that what ought to govern in these questions about what happens in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is science and evidence.

We know the history of the government. It seems to prefer policy-based evidence to evidence-based policy, and really, these decisions ought to be made on the basis of science and evidence.

I suppose on the one hand, the answer to the question depends upon how these boards are structured, who is on them and so forth. Those are important questions in terms of the kinds of decisions that would be made.

I think I have made clear that in relation to this legislation my argument has been that there ought to be a separate independent body dealing with health and safety and that area of regulation. I also know my hon. colleague is well aware of the way the Liberal Party has opposed the many negative changes that the Conservative government has made to harm, really, our environmental legislation in this country.

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-5 today.

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I would like to let members know that I will be splitting time with my hon. colleague from Vegreville—Wainwright, who was just re-elected as the chair of the natural resources committee yesterday in a hard-fought election, and I am sure he will continue on with his good work as part of the natural resources committee. I want to welcome all my new colleagues to the natural resources committee as well.

The genesis of Bill C-5 is a story from way back in the late 1990s about an accident. Due to a faulty door design, a worker was tragically killed in that accident. When we moved on—and there were court cases and other things going on—we realized that there was a gap in the oversight.

On one side, we had the operational aspects, which were looked after by the accord acts between Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada, as well as Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada. The other side of it, the occupational health and safety aspects of this, which covered the workers and the workplace, was typically governed by provincial legislation. So here we have a set of legislation to look after one piece of this and another side looking after the other piece when it was in the offshore. However, there was a gap as to just exactly which piece of legislation covered this particular incident where this worker was tragically killed.

With that in mind, I will fast forward a few years to where the provinces and the federal government started to actually discuss how to close that gap. The only way to do that, which was agreed to between the provinces and federal government, was to decide to put jurisdiction under the accord acts for the occupational health and safety when it came to the offshore. In that way the rules would be clarified, and this legislation is very much targeted to fix the ambiguity in that legislation.

We have a piece of legislation here that is 263 pages long, and it is very technical. To look further into the background of it, pages 26 to 118 and pages 147 to 239—almost 200 pages of the 260—are associated with moving the occupational health and safety legislation into the accord act to make sure it would be covered and that the ambiguity would be eliminated.

The provinces of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador now have undertaken and passed legislation in their legislatures, and it has received royal assent. The provinces have done their part on this. Bill C-5 is our part to bring this up to speed.

As the speaker from Halifax noted, this has been a 10-year process between the provinces and the federal government. It began way back in the 2002-03 time frame when this was meant to be negotiated.

As many of us have learned in the House, even some who have not been here very long, when it comes to negotiating these agreements between the provinces and the federal government, sometimes it takes a little while to do, especially when we think of moving a whole piece of occupational health and safety regulation, or any other piece of legislation, from provincial to federal jurisdiction, or possibly vice versa. Those were some very important things that had to be done as part of this legislation, as well as the negotiations, which had to take place over those 10 years.

We know that working offshore, workplace health and safety has to be paramount. We have to create a situation where it is safe for the workers.

• (1300)

I have never worked on or even been on an oil rig, but I know members of our caucus who have, and it is a challenge. There are many things we can control and many things we cannot. Out at sea on an oil rig, weather conditions and the remoteness of the workplace are just two of the challenges that come to mind.

To address these safety concerns as well as the equipment, on the east coast all offshore activity is regulated by one of two offshore boards. It is either the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board or the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. No oil and gas activity can occur unless the responsible board is satisfied that the planned activities are safe for the workers and for the environment.

Companies must clearly demonstrate that they have identified all health and safety hazards associated with exploration or production activities. They must also show these risks have been carefully evaluated and that they can be properly managed.

I have heard a few comments in the House earlier with respect to some of the powers. The chief safety officers would actually work under the offshore boards, but when we read through the bill we see that the powers they would have are tremendous. Having been involved in construction projects, working with safety officers in those environments, I have no question that if there is ever one person on a construction site who can shut it down for a reason, it is a safety officer. If there are safety concerns for any of the employees, they are paramount. Obviously, if we do not have employees, we will not get the work done.

When I was working on a construction project in my utility days, I knew safety officers who took great delight in some cases that they could actually shut projects down if they were not safe. That is very important for us to remember. Not only do they have those powers, but they are also able to investigate, to compel information from the producers and to get warrants to search places such as personal spaces that may be available on work sites. Those are all very important things that chief safety officers can do, and there is an appeal mechanism in place as well.

The proposed changes are going to address these long-standing gaps, but the accord acts are still the cornerstones. They have been in place for 20 years. They started out with revenue sharing and so on, but now they are responding to these issues based on that one accident.

We worked closely with the provinces on this, in Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, to identify the gaps in the current legislation, and these amendments are top priority for the government and our provincial partners, as evidenced by the provinces already passing this legislation.

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By modernizing these occupational health and safety provisions of the accord acts, we are working continuously to further strengthen Canada's robust offshore regime, and we must continue to work at that. It is a never-ending process. As technology changes, as new types of exploration happen, we have to make sure our safety and our environmental regulations keep up. That is the responsibility of the government, a responsibility we take seriously.

Furthermore, these changes would help protect offshore workers by investing within the accord acts a strong occupational health and safety regime. Most importantly, it would help us develop a modern new safety regime, one that is clear and that is uniquely tailored to the needs of Canada's offshore industry.

We are making good on our commitment. The provinces have made good on their commitment by already passing this legislation in May. I am really pleased to hear in earlier speeches in the House that members of the opposition will be supporting this going to committee. It is a very technical bill. As I mentioned before, it is more than 300 pages, and there are a lot of occupational health and safety aspects in it, very important things that are going to be good for workers, that will make it a safer environment for them to work in, including the transportation to and from the rigs. I am really pleased to hear that, and I look forward to receiving the bill at committee.

• (1305)

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the intervention by the member opposite and his knowledge on the issue of workplace health and safety, his commitment to the principle and how important it is. He referred to the right of workers to shut down a work site if they decided that the performance of that work would place any worker at the site in a dangerous situation. I commend him for that.

I also agree that the bill does outline the duties of occupational health and safety officers and provides these officers with enforcement powers of warrant provisions, inspections and investigation. It does very much clarify those rights.

I wonder if he could clarify something for me. There is a provision in Bill C-4, the budget implementation act, that strips away the right of working people to declare a workplace unsafe, to exercise the right to refuse, and puts all of the power into the hands of the minister. Given what the member said, I think he would agree it certainly is a regressive move. It is a weakening of the rights of working people to determine whether their workplace is in fact safe and healthy.

• (1310)

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague took a bit of literary licence with what I said. I said that the chief safety officer and safety officers on construction sites could actually do that. It would not necessarily be a worker just deciding that he could do that. A certain appeal mechanism would have to happen.

We have shown a lot of leadership in taking this on and putting it in the bill. Typically, the provincial government has control over occupational health and safety for a lot of workforces. The fact that these are in this bill and we are doing it suggests to me that our government recognizes this is very important.

The complaints of the opposition of what was done in Bill C-4 is just a red herring.

**Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend from Tobique—Mactaquac for his eloquent and very clear explanation of the bill and the amendments contained within. I am sure the more members opposite, and all members of the House, understand the importance of the bill, the broader acceptance there will be. I encourage members opposite to pay close attention to it.

This question is about natural resources, but not specifically on this. I know the member knows about this subject and supports it very strongly, and that is natural resource development all across our country in general. Companies that are involved in natural resource development, whether oil and gas, or mining, or other types, have found and understand the huge pool of human resources within first nations communities that lives around, or near, certain sites across the country. They understand the skilled labour pool that is there, available to be trained and put to work on these natural resource sites. Could the member comment on how important this is to our economy, to the natural resource sector's operations and to the first nations communities themselves?

**Mr. Mike Allen:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George, who was once a member with me on the natural resources committee. I very much valued his input, especially in the forest sector, where he was very knowledgeable. It is a very strong industry in his riding as well.

He is right. Just as an example, in Nova Scotia, in late 2000 its GDP was 3% and approximately 4,745 people worked in the offshore sector. Therefore, the number of jobs that this actually creates is important. Following that idea, I can point to a situation in my riding. There is a future mine development. The people are very engaged in discussions with first nations to create employment opportunities. That is one segment of our population that is growing and this represents an opportunity for our workers. There is a tremendous impact for our economy. Making regulatory certainty, like we are in the bill, is an important aspect for investment and to make our economy grow.

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to Canada's offshore safety regime.

Natural resources are an important part of Canada's economy. We all know this. The country was enormously blessed not only with huge reserves of energy, but also with massive tracts of forest, as well as an abundance of minerals and metals.

For generations, we have brought opportunity, jobs and growth to every region of the country through this sector. Right now nearly 800,000 Canadians work in the natural resources sectors. Another 800,000 people are employed by industries serving these sectors. Added up, close to 1.6 million Canadians depend on natural resources for their jobs, 10% of all employment in Canada.



Put together, natural resources account for 15% of our gross domestic product and a full 50% of our exports. When we include the spinoff industries that provide goods and services to the sector, natural resources account for nearly 20% of our GDP, or nearly one-fifth of our economy.

The important thing is that natural resources are poised to play an even bigger role in the years and decades ahead. In fact, over the next decade more than 600 major natural resources projects, worth over \$650 billion, are expected to come online across Canada. That \$650 billion figure represents hundreds of thousands of top-paying jobs in every sector of our economy and in every region of the country.

That is why our government has a plan to unleash Canada's natural resource potential. We call it the responsible resource development approach. This plan is streamlining the reviews of major projects by ensuring fixed timelines, eliminating duplication, strengthening environmental protection and improving aboriginal consultations.

Over the past year, there has been a growing interest in exploration of the offshore resources of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Off Nova Scotia's coast, offshore activity is continuing to pick up, with production of natural gas from the Sable offshore energy project and the startup of the Deep Panuke natural gas project. In fact, in the past two years, the Nova Scotia offshore area has seen the largest bids ever for offshore parcels in Atlantic Canada, with more than \$2 billion bid for 12 parcels offshore. Shell Canada and BP Exploration clearly see the potential that exists in the Nova Scotia offshore area.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the offshore oil and gas industry is contributing to a booming economy and a resurgence in the natural resources sector. I was elected to the House 20 years ago. For the first almost 10 years of the time I spent here, the talk was of Newfoundland and Labrador being a have-not province. It seemed there was no hope.

The fisheries sector was dying due to overfishing and especially by international illegal fishing. The tourism industry in Newfoundland and Labrador had not been developed, like it is now. It truly seemed the future for Newfoundland and Labrador was bleak.

Here we are, a short 20 years later, and Newfoundland and Labrador is a have province, contributing to Canada's economy in a substantial way. Not only that, and I guess this is kind of a bad thing for Alberta, and I am a member of Parliament from Alberta, but we are losing the good Newfoundland workers we depended on so much in Alberta in our resource sector to Newfoundland and Labrador. That is as it should be.

The province's GDP has performed at or above the national average in 9 of the past 13 years. Offshore oil and gas accounted for 33% of the GDP in 2011.

The Hibernia south extension could return as much as \$13 billion to the province in taxes and royalties.

• (1315)

According to a recent report from the province's department of human resources, the resource sector will be the major contributor,

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with an 8% boost in employment. That is 2,300 new jobs by 2015. It is substantial, indeed, for that part of the country.

An exciting thing is that there will be 2,300 new jobs in the new development of the Hebron heavy oil project and the Muskrat Falls hydro project as these projects ramp up. Hibernia was the largest project ever undertaken in Newfoundland and Labrador, but as big as Hibernia was and is, Hebron may be even bigger.

Hebron represents a capital investment of as much as \$14 billion. It is expected to create more than 3,500 good paying jobs for Canadians during construction alone. Hebron is still on target for its first oil by 2015.

Here is the big picture. In both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, resource revenues continue to grow and much of that growth is in the offshore. Exploration and development of the offshore is translating into real, tangible benefits for the people of these provinces, such as more and better jobs, tax cuts for families at all income levels, lower taxes for small businesses and new investments in service and infrastructure that help to attract new investment and build stronger communities. These benefits will continue to grow.

To ensure these offshore activities are ferried out safely, our Conservative government is introducing new legislation to improve Canada's robust offshore regulatory framework. We have been working closely with the Governments of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador to address the gaps found in the current legislation concerning occupational health and safety.

We know that the Senate did a study on this recently and found our regulatory system to be very strong now, but this would improve the process further. We have to ensure that we have the regulatory process that we need to go well into the future, and that is what this would help to do.

After working with the provinces, industry, regulators and labour groups, we are improving our offshore legislation to better protect the safety of Canada's offshore workers. These changes would help protect offshore workers by vesting with the accords act a strong occupational health and safety regime. Both provinces have already given royal assent to their respective bills, but this time, they must wait for the legislation to pass our federal Parliament for the new regime to come into force. Of course, Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia want this legislation passed as quickly as possible.

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The health and safety of Canada's offshore workers is a top priority for the government. Under the current regime, all offshore activities are regulated by Canada's offshore boards. Companies that want to explore offshore must provide and have approved by the provinces board a detailed emergency response plan and contingency plan before any drilling can take place. It is rigorous. This means that Canadian regulators will not allow any offshore activity unless they are absolutely convinced that the environment and safety of workers are well protected. Our offshore installations and the equipment and training required to operate them must meet the strictest regulatory standards.

This legislation would just add to the very substantial and well-functioning legislation that is currently in place. It would lead to better things and to the appropriate regulatory regime that protects health and safety in the decade ahead. That is what this is about. This is something good for eastern Canada and, in particular, for Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia.

• (1320)

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated hearing from the member for Vegreville—Wainwright about his concern for Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. I say to him and anybody else in the House to never count out the Atlantic Canada provinces in terms of fulfilling our proper role in this federation.

I want to ask for the member's thoughts on something. New Democrats are particularly happy that Bill C-5 clarifies the rights of health and safety officers to protect work sites and enforce the rights of working people to work in safe and healthy workplaces. However, if we compare that with provisions in Bill C-4 that clearly strip health and safety officers of their powers in the Canada Labour Code and turn them over to the minister, there is a clear contradiction between, on the one hand, trying to clarify and enforce the rights of working people and, on the other hand, pushing them further up the chain to somebody whose interests are potentially contrary to those of people on the floor.

I want to ask the member if he would please try to clarify for me why his government is pushing forward this serious contradiction in terms of the rights of working people.

• (1325)

**Mr. Leon Benoit:** Mr. Speaker, I have to admit I do not entirely understand the question. I do not understand what the contradiction is, I guess.

What I do know is that we are working with the Provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia in a way that they see as appropriate to further protect the health and safety of workers. I simply do not see a contradiction, but I would certainly welcome further discussion on that point and would listen carefully to the member if he has something to add.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on a point referenced earlier. At the end of the member's comments, he referred to how happy and pleased he is with regard to the wealth that has been generated as a direct result of our natural resources, and so forth.

All of Canada benefits immensely when we properly develop and tap into our natural resources. It does not matter where it is

happening, whether it is in Atlantic Canada or the prairie region. Wherever it might be, there is a great deal of value, and it improves the economic and social well-being of our communities throughout our country. In that sense, Liberals are very pleased to see the type of well generation that is taking place. It has been pointed out that Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia at one point were have-not provinces and are now have provinces, which is always great to see.

That said, this legislation highlights the importance of different stakeholders, levels of governments in particular, having to work together to ensure that the health and safety conditions of workers are in fact being protected and acted on. I want to ask the member to comment on the importance of not only the federal and provincial governments doing their job but also on how critically important it is that workers provide direct input and to what degree he might be able to provide that aspect in this legislation.

**Mr. Leon Benoit:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my comments, workers have been included in this whole process, so it has not only been the federal and provincial governments but all stakeholders, including workers, who have been carefully and continually consulted through the process. I agree with him that consultation is important.

On his first comment, it seems to me there has been a bit of a conversion on the road to Damascus, in effect. The member finally recognizes that when natural resources are developed anywhere in this country, the benefit is spread right across the country. We have certainly seen that with the oil sands, where all of the activity there provides jobs in central Canada and eastern Canada as well as in Alberta. It is the same thing with Newfoundland and Labrador and with natural resource development everywhere, in fact: there are jobs across the country. What is good for one part of this country is good for the whole country. The member brought up an excellent point.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, prior to my election to the House I worked in my own company called Return to Work Solutions. We worked with injured employees to get them back to work. I know that workers' compensation is the jurisdiction of the provinces, particularly the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board in Ontario.

I wonder if the member could talk about the importance of the work that we have done with the provinces to ensure that we are working co-operatively with them in the best interests of the workers involved.

• (1330)

**Mr. Leon Benoit:** Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, both the federal government and the provinces have worked with stakeholders and workers. The result is that the legislation will be effective. Both of those provinces want the legislation passed as soon as possible. Therefore, I look forward to it coming to the natural resources committee, of which I am a member, as soon as possible, so we can have further discussion and get it back to the House so we can get it through as quickly as possible.

*Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### INCOME TAX ACT

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP)** moved that Bill C-201, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (travel and accommodation deduction for tradespersons), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the time has finally come to debate Bill C-201, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (travel and accommodation deduction for tradespersons). It is the very first bill I introduced in this chamber after being elected in January 2006 and it is a bill that is near and dear to my heart.

However, my wait is nothing compared with the wait experienced by the workers who are at the heart of my bill. The Canadian building and construction trades have been lobbying for this legislation for over 35 years. Their tenacity on this file is remarkable and ought to be indicative to the government that this issue matters deeply to the very people who have literally built our country.

In fact, I would be remiss if I did not publicly thank Bob Blakely, the chief operating officer of the Canadian Building Trades Unions, for his personal commitment to this bill and for never ceasing to fight for the best interests of his members. Bob knows only too well what a bumpy road it has been to get to this point today.

Both Liberal and Conservative governments have made promises to the building trades in the past about concrete action to come. However, those games of political footsie led exactly nowhere.

It is time for the games to stop and for all members in the House to stand up and be counted. Lip service is no longer good enough. I am delighted to give members the opportunity to clarify their positions in the coming vote on my bill.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you follow American politics closely, so you will remember former Speaker Tip O'Neill coining the phrase "all politics is local". It is the principle that a politician's success is directly tied to his or her ability to understand and influence the issues of constituents.

While that certainly encapsulates the genesis of bill that we are debating today, I introduced it because of the amazing education and awareness-raising efforts of the members of the Building and Construction Trades Council in my hometown of Hamilton.

In particular, I want to single out the leadership of business manager Joe Beattie, who invited me to meet with the building trades about this issue before I was even elected.

We can see that the Hamilton building trades are not just savvy lobbyists, they are also clairvoyant. They knew I would eventually get elected, even before I believed it myself.

The case that was put to me by Joe, along with the members of Carpenters Local 18, UA Local 67 and Sheetmetal Workers Local 537, made sense then, and it still makes sense now. It makes sense for workers, who would benefit from a reduction in their temporary relocation costs and a reduction in time spent unemployed. It makes sense for employers which will benefit from access to larger pools of qualified workers and reduced costs relating to participation in programs such as the temporary foreign workers program. It makes sense for the government, because it would benefit from increased long-term income tax revenues and reduced dependence on costly social programs.

However, let me not put the cart before the horse. Let us start at the beginning and look at the issue that my bill is seeking to address, the specific remedy that it offers and the opportunity that it represents for the government and all members of the House.

Right now, there are two major human resource challenges facing Canada's construction industry: regional labour shortages and barriers to labour mobility.

The 2011 edition of the Construction Sector Council's "Construction Looking Forward" report suggests that to replace retiring workers and maintain productivity, construction employers, collectively, must hire more than 320,000 new workers between now and 2019. While training programs and recruitment from non-traditional labour sources are part of the solution, they will not be enough to ameliorate the significant labour shortages that are projected for the decade ahead.

Compounding this problem is the unevenness of demand for construction workers. Some regions of the country, such as Newfoundland and Labrador, are expected to face significant worker shortages until next year. Others, such as Ontario, will offer fewer work opportunities in the short term, but many more between 2015 and 2019. A third group, including Quebec, Nova Scotia and Alberta, will offer consistently high numbers throughout the forecast period.

With the demand for labour thus high in some parts of the country and lower in others, it would be in everyone's best interest to facilitate the mobility of unemployed workers from one part of the country to job openings in another.

This would be an easy problem to solve if construction jobs were permanent, but they are not. Construction is a transitory business. When a hospital, a mall or, for that matter, a Pan Am stadium is built, the job is done. Work can last for days, weeks or months, but the bottom line is that it is not permanent and no worker can fairly be expected to move his or her family to a new city every time the workplace changes, and therein lies the rub.

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● (1335)

Under current rules, construction workers often incur large personal expenses to accept jobs in other parts of the province or country because neither their travel nor accommodation expenses are tax deductible under the Income Tax Act. As a result, these costs create a huge disincentive for workers to accept work in those parts of the country that are experiencing skills shortages.

Figures compiled on behalf of the building and construction trades department of the AFL-CIO suggest that the average mobile worker spends approximately \$3,500 of his or her own money to temporarily relocate. That is a significant barrier to the appeal of working mobile. Without wanting to be too cute, I ask my hon. colleagues to imagine what would happen in this place if we told members tomorrow that they could no longer get financial assistance for their secondary residence here in Ottawa while they are here on the job, or for their travel for that matter.

If that is not enough to spur us on to creating fairness for the building trades, let me just remind members that this House already acknowledged that transitory workers merit financial support, and budget 2008 provided a tax break to truck drivers to assist with mobility challenges in that industry. I am calling on us to do the right thing here today and create a labour mobility tax credit for the building and construction industry too. Specifically, my bill would allow tradespersons and indentured apprentices to deduct travel and accommodation expenses from their taxable income, so they can secure and maintain employment at a construction site that is more than 80 kilometres from their home. Adopting this bill would remove one of the largest stated barriers to labour mobility in our country and would pave the road for workers to move freely between regions of the country where their skills are in demand. For me, this is absolutely the right thing to do, and I do not believe that this issue has to be partisan. In fact, I know it is not.

Let me remind members that in April 2008, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities supported my bill in intent if not by name. The two germane recommendations were numbers 1.6 and 1.7. Recommendation number 1.6 reads:

The Committee recommends that the federal government examine the moving expenses provision of the Income Tax Act with a view to extending this provision to individuals who must leave their principal residence to work on a temporary basis, provided their principal residence is retained.

Recommendation number 1.7 says:

The Committee recommends that the federal government provide funding to assist individuals who agree to relocate to enter employment in occupations experiencing skills shortages.

Both of those recommendations are spot-on.

Yes, these recommendations were adopted during a minority Parliament, so it may be assumed that the government members did not actually support them. However, let me provide further evidence to the contrary. Before the Standing Committee on Finance on November 19, 2012, the Conservative member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca responded to a presentation by a representative of the building trades by saying, "...I've been advocating since 2005 for a tax credit on travel and mobility".

Just a month later, another report by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities made this its 30th recommendation. It stated:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada study the anticipated cost of introducing new fiscal measures that would help people who find jobs far away from where they live, for example a tax credit for travel and lodging if a person must work more than 80 kilometres from his or her residence, and that it study the potential impact of such measures on labour mobility and labour shortages.

This time, the government had the majority of members on the committee, so that recommendation would not have passed without the support of the Conservatives.

I want to publicly thank the Conservatives who were members of the committee at that time. They are the members for Mississauga—Streetsville, Don Valley East, Okanagan—Shuswap, Brant and Calgary Northeast, and the member for Simcoe—Grey, who is now Canada's Minister of Labour. I know that the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, in particular, understands this issue and has been advocating for it inside his own caucus. Also, I hope the Minister of Labour is using her new clout to assist his efforts in every possible way. Since she has repeatedly mentioned her own family roots in Alberta's construction industry, I trust that she understands what is at stake here.

Certainly, all of the opposition members on the committee got it right away. I was but one member of that committee, and I was proud to note that my NDP colleagues at HUMA, the members for Hochelaga, Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup and St. John's South—Mount Pearl, have always stood four-square behind the building trades in their communities and immediately expressed their support for my bill.

I am also cautiously optimistic that my Liberal colleague from Cape Breton—Canso will see fit to vote for it, although truthfully I am not sure which side he was on when the issue was being discussed when the Liberals were in government, during their 13 years in office. What I do know is that in opposition he has been nothing but supportive, and I want to thank him for that.

● (1340)

This issue does have broad-based support. What is stopping it from becoming law? At one point both the Minister of Finance and the former Minister of Labour were concerned about how much my proposed tax credit would cost. They were not entirely convinced by the admittedly rough initial calculations, which showed that it would be revenue neutral, since the cost of the tax credit would be more than offset by savings in employment insurance payments that would no longer have to be made as unemployed Canadians went to work in other parts of the country.

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However, the building trades took the minister's concern seriously and had the projections related to my bill audited by Hendry Warren. The audited numbers were given to every member of this House during the last building trades lobby day, and I trust that everyone will have familiarized themselves with the costing of my proposal. However, let us take a quick look at the numbers again just to make absolutely certain that we are all on the same page.

Hendry Warren estimated that there are 1.6 million construction workers in Canada. An estimated 10% of them travel each year. At an average cost of \$3,500 per worker per year, a 15% tax credit would cost the government \$525 per mobile worker per year, for a total cost of \$84 million.

Working with the same number of 160,000 travelling skilled trades workers whose average weekly employment insurance benefit would be \$393 per week for an average period of unemployment of four weeks if they were not working means that the government would pay \$251 million in EI benefits per year. That means that the tax credit proposal in my bill would actually save the government \$167 million per year.

Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker, because these numbers will be germane in your consideration of whether my bill will ultimately require a royal recommendation. Far from being an expenditure, my bill would actually save the government \$167 million each and every year, and that is just premised on savings on EI.

As the audited statement makes clear, when savings from all social programs are taken into account along with increased long-term income tax revenues from employment, the labour mobility tax credit is more likely to yield a return on the government's investment of nearly five to one. We would think the Minister of Finance would be doing a happy dance at the prospect of such a windfall.

The bill really is a win, win, win. As I said at the outset, workers win because the travel and accommodation costs would no longer be a barrier to accepting decent jobs for decent wages in other regions of the country; employers win because they would have access to larger pools of qualified workers without needing to resort to the costly temporary foreign workers program; the government wins by having taken a concrete step toward addressing regional skilled labour shortages, all the while reducing dependence on costly social programs and actually boosting long-term income tax revenues. It does not get much better than that.

Let me conclude by bringing this discussion full circle. I want to end where I began.

Locally and nationally, the building and construction trades have lobbied for the bill for over 35 years. They represent an industry that is critical to our economy. In fact, construction is Canada's largest private sector industry. Its direct impact is immense. Construction accounts for 12% of Canada's GDP.

The industry has more than 260,000 businesses, employing more than a million Canadians. It is responsible for installing, repairing, and renovating more than \$150 billion worth of infrastructure every single year. It is a threshold industry on which everything else is based.

In a very real sense, the building and construction trades have built our country. It is time for us to shore up their work. It is time for us to heed their call for action. It is time for us to provide them with a tax credit for travel and accommodation expenses when they accept work more than 80 kilometres away from their home. It is time to pass my bill.

● (1345)

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I come from a long line of carpenters. I was a carpenter myself. I built a house about three years ago, so I understand what travelling to work involves and the cost involved.

My first job out of high school was working at a gold mine in Manitoba. We incurred the cost ourselves because there was a good job waiting at the other end. The incentive was the good job we got at the other end.

I am not clear and I do not quite see the linkage to absolute employment with a tax credit. I do not think it would be that direct, and you are making the presumption that there would be an automatic increase in employment based on the tax credit. I would ask that you explain that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would remind all members to direct their questions through the Chair.

The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question. I take the member at his word that it is a sincere question and I believe it is.

When someone accepts a job in another part of the country and does that on a permanent basis, the Income Tax Act already provides assistance to those workers. The Income Tax Act, for example, allows workers to write off their moving expenses, but that is when they are moving for a job that will be permanent.

What happens in the building trades is that they may be asked to move from my hometown of Hamilton to Sudbury for a period of six months while the Sudbury hospital is being built. However, that is not a permanent job so the worker would have to move his or her entire family to Sudbury for six months. That makes no sense.

If there is a trades shortage in Sudbury, this would allow a worker to accept that job in Sudbury, get some additional help for accommodation and travel expenses to that job site, but would allow him to then come home and the next time perhaps accept a job in Sarnia, where perhaps a school is being built. That is what the bill is designed to do. If there are labour shortages in one part of the province or country and we have skilled workers who are unemployed in another region, the bill would facilitate those workers accepting jobs in other parts of the country.

The member said at the outset that he was formerly a member of the carpenters' union. The carpenters were a driving force behind my bill and I would encourage the member to talk to the leadership of his former union. I am sure they would be delighted to sit down with him at greater length than I can do here in the House, and explain the details. I know that he will come to understand the merits of the bill.

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**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is a vast land and labour mobility is very important. Within provinces a redistribution of labour often occurs that goes beyond 80 kilometres. For example, in my province of Manitoba there might be something happening in Brandon or in northern Manitoba. Is the member aware of any provinces that provide the type of tax break she is suggesting in the bill?

Seeing the bill go to committee is positive, but it would be very helpful if the member could cite an example from some of the larger provinces where there is a need for labour mobility.

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Mr. Speaker, as the member will know, the Income Tax Act with which my bill deals, is a federal piece of legislation. It applies equally to all provinces of the country, so this amendment would for the first time allow workers, no matter where they live in Canada, to make this deduction under the federal Income Tax Act.

• (1350)

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my riding is huge.

In concrete terms, if this bill were passed, how much money would someone receive if they accepted a six-month contract 150 km from home? How much money might he and his family save?

[English]

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Mr. Speaker, if someone in the member's riding were to accept a job 150 kilometres away from his or her home, they would be able to deduct the travel and accommodation costs. The costs for getting to the job site 150 kilometres away, as well as their accommodation for the six months while they are working away from their primary residence, would be deductible on their federal income tax in the next year that they file their income tax return.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in debate today on Bill C-201, which is sponsored by the member for Hamilton Mountain.

The bill proposes to allow tradespeople and apprentices to deduct from their taxable income travel and accommodation expenses that they incur in order to secure and maintain employment. These deductions would be subject to certain conditions.

I would like to focus on a few reasons why I oppose Bill C-201.

First of all, our government is quite focused on providing support for employees and tradespeople across the country. Second, the bill would be ineffective and inequitable. It would be ineffective because there is no evidence that the proposal would increase the likelihood that tradespeople will travel more for work, and inequitable in that some tradespeople would receive tax relief for work-related travel while other workers would not.

Third, especially during a time of fiscal responsibility, the bill would be very costly and that cost would be significant at this time in our economy. The bill looks nice and has a nice sound to it. It is kind of like a chocolate cake with a lot of icing on it. We look at the

icing on the chocolate cake and say it looks tasty, but it really is not good for us. There is no way to square that piece of cake to be good for us.

I will start by highlighting our government's role in supporting employees and tradespeople. I would like to say that the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain did not support any of the legislation that we brought in to support employees and tradespeople. That needs to be noted during this debate. I mean, it is one thing to have a personal preference. It is one thing to have a party bias. I think we all have some party bias in this place. However, it is another thing to ignore good legislation simply because it is the government that brings it in.

Canada's strong economic performance during the global recession has been widely recognized around the world. Although it may not have gotten the same amount of press as other key initiatives, Canada's economic action plan provided key funding to several organizations to stimulate growth and jobs during the recent recession and helped tradespeople and other Canadians find jobs.

Our government knows that Canadian workers are among the best educated and the best trained in the world. However, Canada is facing a skilled labour shortage. In particular, persistent pockets of unfilled positions exist for some skilled tradespeople and professional occupations. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, for example, has identified Canada's skills shortage as the number one issue facing its membership.

Our government takes this issue seriously. To help Canadians connect with available jobs, in economic action plan 2013 we set out a three-point plan to address these challenges. First, economic action plan 2013 introduced the new Canada job grant, which would provide \$15,000 or more per person, including the maximum federal contribution of \$5,000, to be matched by the provinces, territories and employers, to ensure Canadians are getting the skills employers are seeking.

Second, the plan would create opportunities for apprentices by working with provinces and territories to examine the use of practical tests as a method of assessment and to harmonize requirements, and by introducing measures that would support the use of apprentices through federal construction and maintenance contracts, investments in affordable housing and infrastructure projects that receive federal funding. Finally, it would provide support to groups that are under-represented in the job market, such as persons with disabilities, youth, aboriginal peoples and newcomers, to help them find good jobs.

These are great initiatives that are directly helping to fill the labour shortages and connect Canadians with jobs. These are all measures that the opposition has voted against. If the member's bill attempts to focus on apprentices and tradespeople, let me highlight some of the measures our government has already taken to support these individuals.

Since 2006, our government has invested nearly \$2.7 billion per year to support skills and training programs. We have supported tradespeople with the tradesperson's tools deduction and extended the fees eligible for the tuition tax credit to include those examinations required to be certified as a tradesperson in Canada, thereby encouraging more tradespeople to become red seal tradesmen. With a red seal, they can work anywhere in the country.

● (1355)

Our government has legislated measures such as the apprenticeship job creation tax credit, the apprenticeship incentive grant, and the apprenticeship completion grant. Tax credits already exist for employers and tradespersons, such as the Canada employment credit, the moving expenses deduction, and the special or remote work sites tax exemptions.

That is not all. We understand that education has a big part in this equation as well. We will promote education in fields where there is high demand for employees, including science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and skilled trades. We will help improve educational and labour market outcomes for aboriginal peoples by investing to improve the on-reserve income assistance program and by providing funding for post-secondary scholarships and bursaries.

We will continue to work with the provinces and territories and stakeholders to improve the foreign credential recognition process, thereby enhancing the integration of internationally trained individuals in the job market.

Put simply, our government remains focused on what matters to Canadians—jobs and economic growth and ensuring that Canada's economic advantage today will translate into the long-term prosperity of tomorrow.

Let me now address some of the specific concerns we have with the bill before us.

First, we believe that providing an income tax deduction for job-related travel and accommodation expenses, as proposed under Bill C-201, would make it difficult to ensure that tax relief is not provided for personal expenses that reflect lifestyle decisions. Under the provisions of this bill, expenses incurred by eligible individuals who choose to live more than 80 kilometres from the workplace for personal reasons would qualify for tax relief.

Second, the open-ended nature of the proposed deduction would make it vulnerable to unfair tax planning and abuse. For example, individuals could arrange their affairs to claim a recreational property, such as a cottage that is more than 80 kilometres from work, as their principal residence. They could then deduct the cost of maintaining their urban residence as an expense required to secure and maintain employment. That is a serious flaw with this piece of proposed legislation. This is not conducive to a fair tax system, especially as we have just been debating Bill C-4, which emphasizes our government's commitment to a fair tax system for all Canadians.

Third, the bill would raise equity concerns, as eligible tradespersons and indentured apprentices would be able to reduce their tax liability when they incurred eligible travel and accommodation expenses whereas other workers who had to incur similar work-related travel expenses, such as nurses, would not receive tax assistance. This would result in individuals with a similar capacity to

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pay taxes having markedly different tax liabilities, due solely to occupational differences.

Fourth, it is not clear that the bill would increase travel by tradespersons and indentured apprentices. In fact, for individuals who would have incurred eligible travel and accommodation expenses in any case, the deduction would represent a windfall gain.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the cost of the proposal would be significant. Preliminary estimates suggest that providing tax assistance to tradespersons and indentured apprentices for travel and accommodation expenses would cost approximately \$60 million per year at maturity. At a time when our government is committed to returning to balanced budgets and eliminating the deficit, this bill, which already raises some concerns, would be extremely costly to the government.

In addition, Bill C-201 would create pressure to extend tax relief in respect of other expenses or other types of employees, at a higher fiscal cost.

Make no mistake. Our government believes in tax relief for all Canadians. Canadians know that when it comes to tax reductions, this government has a long-standing record of significant achievements. By keeping taxes low, our government is allowing Canadians to keep more of their hard-earned money.

In conclusion, this bill is poorly targeted, would subsidize personal choices, and would open the door to unfair tax planning. It would also entail a cost of approximately \$60 million per year. It would create pressure to extend tax relief to other work-related expenses at a higher fiscal cost. In addition, our government already provides tax relief and program support for tradespersons and apprentices and tax relief for employees who must incur travel-related expenses in the course of their employment.

● (1400)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, maybe a good place to start is to draw a comparison on why it is important to recognize that there is value to the private member's bill that has been brought forward this afternoon and the fact that we should allow the bill to go to committee.

On the one hand, the government representative has just made it very clear that if we take a look at a cost analysis of the implementation of this bill, we are looking at somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$60 million. On the other hand, the sponsor of the bill said that the Minister of Finance should, in essence, be rubbing his hands and saying what good fortune we have in this particular bill because the bill will generate a net benefit to the taxpayer in excess of, I believe, \$80 million. I believe it was just over \$100 million. I suspect, if the truth be known, that it would likely be somewhere in between.

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I do not necessarily believe that is and should be the only argument to be made on whether the legislation should be passed. A number of other factors need to be taken into consideration, but what is clear is that there is, no doubt, a question regarding the impact of the legislation from a financial point of view for Canadians. What would it actually be?

We would be in a better position to get an answer to that question if we were able to take it to the committee stage. There we could bring forward individuals, whether they are research analysts or other professionals, possibly from the Department of Finance, to find out what the actual answer is.

All I know is that either the former speaker or the member who introduced the bill has to be wrong. We know that. There is close to a \$200 million gap between the two of them. I do believe that there is some merit for us to acknowledge right up front that we really do not necessarily know the facts.

In that sense, I would suggest that we need to take an assessment of what the bill would be able to do—

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer—

**An hon. member:** There is no question.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I am not asking a question.

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** We only have 10 minutes of questions. We are resuming debate.

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity for questions and answers and I am sure the member would have provided some clarification on that \$60 million. I suspect that is why he was up on his feet.

We had a Speaker's ruling just recently in which the Speaker indicated that we have to take all members as hon. members and believe that they are bringing truthful answers to the floor. We will leave the PMO out of this debate. I would assume that in all honesty this particular member did bring forward what he believes is the true figure, as I do believe the sponsor of the bill. I understand that from within the construction industry stakeholders group there was a study or some sort of a financial analysis that was conducted. There is no reason for us to believe that was not done properly. That is why I believe that there is merit in terms of us taking the bill to the next level.

We can all talk about the construction industry and the importance that industry plays in our country from coast to coast to coast. We can no doubt all talk about individual stories. My brother has been in the construction industry for 20-plus years. He has done work in British Columbia and Manitoba. He is currently in Saskatchewan. Sitting around the family reunion-type kitchen table there is always a discussion and he is always quite willing to share his thoughts and opinions about that particular industry with me.

I see, understand and appreciate the value of recognizing the importance of that industry and what it is that we can do to help facilitate some very serious issues. Those that I would highlight have

been pointed out. Labour mobility is a big issue when it comes to the whole construction area. That is one of the reasons why I posed the question to the sponsor of the bill in regard to other jurisdictions. It is not only from one region of the country to another region. For example, we can have more labour shortages in some areas of a province than in other areas of that same province.

When I posed the question I was trying to get a better understanding as to whether there were other jurisdictions because I believe that is often quite helpful. A province does have the ability through provincial consideration to recognize and provide for tax deductions that would allow for the type of measures the member is hoping to achieve in the bill. Are there examples that could be given from other jurisdictions outside of Canada? I believe there is value in terms of us knowing this information once we go to the committee stage. That is the reason why I asked.

Those of us in the Liberal Party recognize the importance of labour mobility. Economies shift quite significantly in terms of activities. Just an hour or so ago we were talking about the economic activity out in Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia. A lot of that is being driven through our natural resource industry and the demand that is there. In Manitoba we could talk about hydro development and the potential of the Limestone generating station or the future Conawapa, as well as some of the other major projects that are on the horizon, whether in Vancouver, out on the east coast or in central Canada. We all know and I suspect we can appreciate why that takes place. How are we able to best accommodate that?

Last year we talked about the foreign worker program. We have tens of thousands of foreign workers who come into Canada, in part, to meet that particular demand.

● (1405)

First and foremost, is the government doing its fair share in ensuring that our jobs are in fact being offered and made available to Canadians, and second, to what degree are we enabling individuals to get those jobs?

I could be corrected on this, but I believe just over 1.5 million people work directly within the construction industry. There is a percentage of those individual workers who have to, not necessarily out of choice in terms of their profession—if a plumber, for example, living in Winnipeg, Manitoba, is offered the opportunity to work on a significant project in the province of Saskatchewan, whether it is Regina, Yorkton or wherever it might be, that plumber should be afforded the opportunity to take it. On the surface of the bill that is being proposed, there is a great deal of merit in allowing for or providing some form of tax deduction dealing with one's travel and accommodation. There is merit for that.

If we take the micro situation and apply it to the macro situation, one can get a better appreciation for why it is that we should be looking at this bill quite seriously. That is the reason why, as the Liberal Party has indicated, it is prepared to send it to committee. There are a lot of questions that need to be answered and I look forward to its ultimate passage, hopefully, even though I am somewhat doubtful, given the government members' position on it. We will have to wait and see when it ultimately comes to a vote.



*Private Members' Business*

●(1410)

**Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I stand in support of Bill C-201, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, travel and accommodation deduction for tradespersons. I want to thank the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain for tabling the bill in the House of Commons. I want to thank the hon. member on behalf of untold thousands, tens of thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Atlantic Canadians and Canadians in general who migrate for work across the country and around the world. I meet them at airports. I talk to them on airplanes. I knock on the doors of their families left behind.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have a history of working away from home. Our forefathers worked on the Grand Banks and off the Labrador coast for months on end. They lived on wooden walls, the sealing ships, for weeks, when they were in the fat, when the seal hunt was in its prime.

In my riding of St. John's South—Mount Pearl, on the top of Signal Hill, at the entrance to St. John's harbour, is a peak that is known as Ladies Lookout. Ladies Lookout is the very point where women gathered for generations to look for their men returning from sea after days, weeks, months, and years. The wharf and lookout of yesterday is the airport of today.

So many Newfoundland and Labrador families live on a rotation: two weeks on, one week off; four weeks on, two weeks off. Long commutes and extended absences have been a way of life in Newfoundland and Labrador. However, the scale and intensity of the westward move to places like Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, and Lloydminster that began a few decades ago sets it apart from past experience. Let me quote from a recent article I read on the Newfoundland and Labrador migration: "Some call it a rite of passage. Some wives back home call it a fiscal blessing, but a blow to the heart".

It is not just men who migrate for work; it is women too. It is our youth, our newly educated, bayman and townie alike. Leaving for work is a way of life, especially since the early 1990s when our fisheries collapsed. We have lost 90,000 people since then. One-sixth of our population left. They are gone. Untold thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians migrate for work on a weekly or monthly basis so that their families can live comfortably back home. It is how I grew up, personally, with my father away for six to nine months at a time. He worked on what was then known as the Distant Early Warning line across the north.

If one drives through the outports today in rural Newfoundland and Labrador one will see nice, new homes and nice vehicles. There is pride in property, but we've always seen that. My office has tried to research the amount of money that migrant Newfoundland and Labrador workers bring back with them. There are no accurate numbers, but I can say it is in the hundreds of millions of dollars. It is in the billions of dollars. According to Statistics Canada, the number of workers commuting from Atlantic Canada to Alberta increased threefold between 2004 and 2008. The median earning for oil and gas workers in Alberta who live out of province was just under \$60,000 in 2009.

Bill C-201 would impact thousands of Atlantic Canadians and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The bill would allow trade-

persons and apprentices to deduct travel and accommodation expenses from their taxable income. The bill would allow tradespeople to maintain employment on work sites that are more than 80 kilometres away. The bill would help migratory workers and migratory construction workers. There is no doubt that the bill would help workers in my riding of St. John's South—Mount Pearl, in all of Newfoundland and Labrador and in Atlantic Canada.

Workers have to leave home. That is hard enough, but they should not have to foot the bill for travel and accommodation too. Under current rules, construction workers often incur large personal expenses to accept jobs in other parts of the province or country because neither travel nor accommodation expenses are tax deductible under the Income Tax Act. These costs create a huge disincentive for workers to accept work in other parts of the country that are experiencing skills shortages.

●(1415)

Figures suggest that the average mobile worker spends approximately \$3,500 of his or her own money to temporarily relocate. That \$3,500 is a significant barrier to the appeal of accepting jobs away from home. We have to make it easier and more enticing for skilled labourers in this country to fill labour shortages in other parts of the country.

How much will the bill cost? It is actually revenue neutral for the federal government, because the cost associated with the income tax cut is more than made up by savings in employment insurance. Instead of punishing Canadians who receive EI, we can start helping skilled labourers in this country by making it easier for them to accept work.

Let me throw out some numbers. There are an estimated 1.6 million construction workers in Canada, and 10% of them travel each year. At an average cost of \$3,500 per worker, a 15% tax credit would cost the federal government \$525 per mobile worker per year, for a total cost of \$84 million. However, if the same number of 160,000 travelling skilled trades workers, which is 10% of 1.6 million, received average weekly employment insurance benefits of \$393 per week, for an average period of unemployment of four weeks, the government would pay \$250 million in EI benefits per year. That works out to \$84 million from a tax cut versus \$250 million in EI benefits. The tax credit proposed in the bill would result in net savings of more than \$160 million a year.

The bill would not just help workers. The bill would help employers, because they would have larger pools of skilled workers across this country to draw from. They would not have to resort to hiring temporary foreign workers to get the jobs done.

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The bill would also help Newfoundland and Labrador. We have huge projects on the horizon, such as Labrador's Muskrat Falls and offshore oil projects. We have had three new offshore oil discoveries within the past year off Newfoundland and Labrador.

Despite successive Conservative and Liberal governments making promises for years about helping migratory workers, there has been nothing done. In fact, this bill has been tabled in each Parliament since 2006. It was part of the New Democratic Party's platform in 2008 and 2011. Now we have the opportunity again to help migratory workers in this country.

The ask is simple. Allow our tradespeople and apprentices to deduct travel and accommodation expenses from their taxable incomes so that they can secure and maintain employment at a construction site that is more than 80 kilometres away from their homes. It is that simple.

People in this mobile workforce maintain homes and families in communities across Canada, in Atlantic Canada, and in Newfoundland and Labrador while using personal funds to maintain employment.

Included in the tax credit would be the cost of travel, meals, and accommodation, less any money paid by the employer for those purposes.

To conclude, the bill makes sense for workers. The bill makes sense for families. The bill makes sense for employers. The bill makes sense for industry. The bill makes sense for taxpayers. The bill makes sense, period.

• (1420)

**Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity today to speak to Bill C-201, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, to allow:

—tradespersons and indentured apprentices to deduct from their taxable income any travel and accommodation expenses that they have incurred in order to secure and maintain employment in a construction activity at a job site that is located at least 80 kilometres away from their ordinary place of residence.

While the hon. member's goal is worthy, to support tradespersons and indentured apprentices, her proposal contains a few flaws. Providing a deduction for job-related travel and accommodation expenses as proposed under Bill C-201 will make it difficult to ensure that tax relief is not provided for personal expenses solely reflecting lifestyle decisions.

Similarly, the open-ended nature of the proposed deduction raises serious concerns that could also make it vulnerable to abuse and unfair tax planning. For example, one can envision a situation where an individual can claim a residence, perhaps a cottage, more than 80 kilometres from work as their principal residence and then deduct those costs of maintaining their urban residence as an expense required to secure and maintain employment.

This bill would raise equality concerns as eligible tradespersons and indentured apprentices would be able to reduce their tax liability when they incurred eligible travel and accommodation expenses, whereas other workers who must incur similar work-related travel expenses, such as nurses, firefighters, correctional officers, would not receive that same tax assistance.

There is also a risk that this bill would simply result in a windfall gain to individuals who have incurred eligible travel expenses and accommodation in any case. Estimates suggest that providing tax assistance to tradespersons and apprentices for travel and accommodation could cost approximately \$60 million every year at maturity. These costs are substantial. Our government is already on track to eliminate the deficit and remain squarely focused on this goal. Canadians expect us to be fiscally responsible at all times. Therefore, while our government is ensuring that we continue to support tradespersons and apprentices, this bill is not a measure that we can support.

Let me also suggest to the member opposite that tax changes should be undertaken through the budget process and not on an ad hoc basis. The budget process enables the government to fully consider trade-offs, balance priorities and undertake new fiscal commitments only to the extent that they are affordable. The hon. member should also be aware that Canada's tax system already provides a number of tax relief provisions for employees, including tradespersons who travel or relocate for their employment. For example, there is a moving expense deduction which recognizes costs incurred by workers who move their ordinary place of residence at least 40 kilometres closer to their place of business or employment in order to pursue employment or education opportunities.

There is also a special and remote work sites tax provision that allows employers to provide board and lodging benefits to employees on a tax-free basis. Under this provision, where an employee is required to work at a remote location where only employer-provided accommodation is available, while continuing to pay expenses associated with his or her own home, amounts paid by the employer for room and board at the remote location are not included in the employee's income. The exemption recognizes in many instances employers need to provide these benefits in order to attract workers to a particular work site.

There is also a travel expense deduction which recognizes costs associated with business travel. The travel expense deduction allows employees who are ordinarily required to carry on the duties of employment away from the employer's place of business or in different locations to deduct travel expenses incurred, including 50% of their meal expenses when they are required by the employer to pay their expenses on their own. For example, an employee who must travel from his normal work site in Ottawa to Brampton or from Whitehorse to Carmacks in order to perform employment-related duties may claim a deduction for eligible travel and meal expenses to the extent that their employer does not already pay those expenses.

• (1425)

Similarly, self-employed individuals may deduct reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the generation of income from a business, including travel expenses such as lodging and, again, 50% of their meal costs while they are away from home.

Close to home for me, there is the northern residents deduction, which provides tax relief to individuals in northern and isolated communities to assist in drawing skilled labour to the North.

Finally, in 2006 our government introduced the Canada employment credit for all employees. In 2013, the Canada employment credit provides a tax credit of up to \$1,117 on employment income. By increasing the amount of income that employed Canadians can earn without paying federal income tax, the employment credit recognizes that some of the income that individuals earn is used to pay for work-related expenses.

Our government is committed to lower taxes for all Canadians, tradespersons included. That is why, since coming into office in 2006, we have introduced broad-based tax relief such as lowering the GST from 7% to 5% and introducing the tax-free savings account.

In total, we have introduced more than 160 tax-relief measures, reducing taxes in every way that the Government of Canada collects them. Canadians at all income levels are benefiting from the personal income tax relief introduced by our government, with low- and middle-income Canadians receiving proportionally greater relief. Overall, personal income tax rates are now 11% lower with the tax relief provided by the government, and more than one million low-income Canadians have been removed entirely from our tax rolls.

Our strong record of tax relief is saving the typical Canadian family of four more than \$3,200 each and every year. This is significant. It means that hard-working Canadians from coast to coast to coast have more money in their own pockets at the end of every year so they can decide how best to spend that money.

In addition, our government has been aggressive in closing tax loopholes used by a small group of taxpayers who have been trying to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. Ensuring tax fairness keeps taxes low for all Canadians and their families.

To conclude, while we understand the objectives of the bill, it is flawed, and therefore we simply cannot support it.

The proposed deductions would be hard to monitor, would make it vulnerable to unfair tax planning, would be limited to amounts earned at the new work location in the year, and would cost approximately \$60 million a year at maturity. Therefore, I urge all members to join me in opposing the bill before us for reasons I have mentioned.

### *Private Members' Business*

Some questions about mobility rights and the importance of mobility across our country were discussed earlier. While we recognize that mobility is important, the one thing I have heard as the member of Parliament for Yukon as I have travelled across the North is people saying that they want Yukon people for Yukon jobs, northern people for northern jobs. I would say that the same thing is true for all regions in our country.

Proposing the bill without supporting the other important measures that our government has put in place in budget 2013 and previous budgets that would actually make it a reality for Yukon people to get Yukon jobs, northern people to get northern jobs, and regional people to get regional jobs so that mobility is not a requirement would be something the opposition should seriously take a look at.

I can point to examples like the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining in my home territory where we are trying to improve working conditions and take an unskilled labour force and move it into semi-skilled and highly skilled labour opportunities. The literacy investments that our government is making across the three territories to give people that first chance of success in their own home so they do not have to exercise those mobility rights is a critical measure.

I am surprised that the members of the opposition have not supported those measures, in particular the member for Western Arctic, who has voted against those critical measures each and every time we put them in place.

● (1430)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order has dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[*Translation*]

It being 2:30 p.m., pursuant to an order made Monday, October 21, 2013, this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 4, 2013, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)



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