



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 147 • NUMBER 026 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, November 28, 2013**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 28, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)  
[English]

### HOUSE OF COMMONS

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table the House of Commons “Report to Canadians” for 2013.

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### INFORMATION COMMISSIONER OF CANADA

**The Speaker:** I also have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 39(1) of the Access to Information Act, a special report of the Information Commissioner. It is entitled “Access to Information at Risk from Instant Messaging”.

[Translation]

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

\* \* \*

[English]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government’s response to 11 petitions.

\* \* \*

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first, second, and third reports from the Standing Committee on Natural Resources in relation to order in council appointments, which were referred to the committee.

I have another report to present this morning, in both official languages. It is the fourth report of the Standing Committee on

Natural Resources in relation to the supplementary estimates (B) for 2013-14.

[Translation]

#### FINANCE

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Finance concerning Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures.

[English]

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### THE CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-556, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (breath alcohol analysis).

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce a bill that is designed to allow random breath testing.

This law will save lives throughout Canada by giving our police an additional tool in the fight against drinking and driving.

It is important to note that, in countries that use it, random breath testing has proved to be effective in deterring drunk individuals from getting behind the wheel.

Various stakeholders, including Mothers Against Drunk Driving, have been calling for this amendment to the Criminal Code for years. Some representatives from MADD are here in Parliament today.

I am encouraged by the fact that the government has already acknowledged that this is a top priority. I hope that members from all the parties will support this initiative, which will make our roads safer for Canadian families.

*Routine Proceedings*

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

\* \* \*

[English]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I anticipate that if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, during Routine Proceedings on Monday, December 2, 2013, the 42nd Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House in the First Session of the 41st Parliament, be deemed to have been presented under the rubric "Presenting Reports from Committees"; under the rubric "Motions", a motion to concur in the Report be deemed moved and seconded; no Member may speak for longer than 10 minutes on the motion to concur in the 42nd Report and the speeches be not subject to a question and comment period; provided that a Member may indicate to the Speaker that he or she will be dividing his or her time with another Member; and after 40 minutes of debate, or when no Member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the motion be deemed adopted on division.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I was attempting to speak to this before it was agreed to by unanimous consent.

I wanted a clarification, that is all. I was standing before it was so ordered.

**The Speaker:** I did not hear any nays when I asked if it was the unanimous consent of the House to adopt the motion. It has been adopted.

If the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands needs clarification of the consequences of it, I would invite her to approach the table or to consult with the government House leader.

\* \* \*

### PETITIONS

[Translation]

#### LABOUR-SPONSORED FUNDS

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition on labour-sponsored funds, which, as we know, are often used as a primary tool for saving for retirement.

The middle class also uses labour-sponsored funds to save. These funds invest in small and medium-sized businesses, create jobs and spur economic development. The petitioners are calling on the government to take all necessary steps to reverse its decision to

eliminate the 15% federal tax credit granted to people who invest in labour-sponsored funds, as announced in the budget on March 21, 2013.

• (1010)

[English]

#### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of members of West Hill United Church.

The petitioners call on the Canadian government to uphold our treaty obligations to first nations by taking the necessary steps to address numerous issues facing these communities in Canada. The petition points to the inequality in provision of government services between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians, resulting in a poorer quality of housing, education, water, health care, social services, and infrastructure for first nations.

Specifically, the petition calls for an end to the 2% cap on annual increases to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and the reversal of the proposed \$1.2 billion cut to the 2015-16 budget of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

#### RAIL TRANSPORTATION

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have four petitions.

The first one is from my constituents, who are calling on the government to make sure there is a reliable, fast, and accessible national rail passenger service.

Since the future of VIA Rail is threatened by a 62% cut in federal funding, communities from coast to coast will be hurt. Canada's rail network has shrunk by 20% while all other G8 countries are investing in high-speed rail. These petitioners call on the Government of Canada to immediately reverse funding cuts to VIA Rail, to secure the future of passenger rail service through federal legislation and long-term funding, and to make sure there is a legislative framework that governs VIA Rail so that we can get Canadians the 21st century transportation they deserve.

#### PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition is also about transit.

The petitioners are calling on the government to make sure there is a national transit strategy. They note that Canada is the only OECD country that does not have such a strategy and that there is an \$18 billion gap in transit infrastructure needs.

#### PENSIONS

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition is on old age security.

Seniors want and deserve their old age security at age 65, not when they turn 67. The petitioners want to make sure there is an enhancement of the pension system via the guaranteed income supplement so that seniors can be lifted out of poverty.

## MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the last petition is on side guards.

The petitioners are calling on the federal government to ensure that there are side guards on all trucks in order to save the lives of pedestrians and cyclists. They note that side guards on trucks would also save fuel.

## MANDATORY LABELLING OF PRODUCTS

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

The first is from residents throughout Saanich—Gulf Islands, from Pender Island, Galiano Island, Saanich, and Victoria, all calling on this House to take note of the fact that many products contain ingredients that consumers are not made aware of, and that in order to make well-informed decisions there should be mandatory labelling with complete, accountable, transparent disclosure of all substances in household and workplace products.

This is a petition I am proud to present.

## LYME DISEASE

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition is in support of private member's Bill C-442.

This is the private member's bill I submitted to have a national Lyme disease strategy. I think there is hardly a member of this House who does not know someone who has been affected by this terrible disease.

I am very encouraged by the level of support being received. The petitioners who signed the petition I submit today are from Salt Spring Island in British Columbia, in my riding.

## SEX SELECTION

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present two petitions today, the first noting that we are in 16 days of international condemnation against all forms of violence against women and girls right now.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

● (1015)

## IMPAIRED DRIVING

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is representing thousands of people from British Columbia. The petition highlights that 22-year-old Kassandra Kaulius was killed by a drunk driver.

A group of people who have also lost loved ones to impaired drivers, called Families for Justice, believe that the current impaired driving laws are too lenient. They are calling for new mandatory minimum sentencing for people who have been convicted of impaired driving causing death.

## THE BUDGET

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to table two petitions.

*Routine Proceedings*

The first petition is in support of fair budget legislation and contains signatures from Leduc, Edmonton, Valleyview, Enoch, Calgary, St. Albert, and Cold Lake, Alberta.

The petitioners are raising concerns with the two 400-plus-page omnibus bills in which dozens of unrelated measures are put through changing old age security and health care, gutting environmental laws, reducing support for job-creating research and development, and shrinking oversight of the government. The petitioners are deeply concerned about the wide-reaching impact of this kind of procedure. They call upon the Government of Canada to halt the practice of introducing omnibus legislation to avoid democratic accountability to Canadians.

## SUPPORT FOR YOUNG CANADIANS

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Edmonton, Fort McMurray, and St. Albert. They are petitioning the House of Commons to support young Canadians.

The petitioners bring to the attention of the House that after 50 years of economic growth, youth should not have to accept less than their parents did. They should not have to accept lower wages, weaker pensions, less secure health care, and less affordable education. The petitioners call upon the government to address youth unemployment, which is now twice the national average, and to stop gutting environmental protection and ignoring climate change. The petitioners call upon the government to change its policies to build on the skills, aspirations, and potential of today's youth, instead of dumping an ever-increasing social, economic, and ecological debt on the backs of future generations.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by dozens of Canadians, particularly out of the Toronto area, declaring their opposition to the Enbridge northern gateway pipeline, a pipeline that would carry raw bitumen 1,100 kilometres from the Alberta oil sands across a bit of Alberta but mostly British Columbia to the B.C. coast, where it would then be put in supertankers.

The petitioners of this particular petition out of Toronto call upon the federal government to put an end to this practice of allowing such dangerous products to travel through an unregulated environment that the current government has created by stripping environmental laws and protections for the Canadian people. The petitioners call upon the government to respect the 1972 supertanker moratorium that has been protecting B.C.'s coast for more than a generation.

## SEX SELECTION

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present a petition on behalf of constituents from Provost, Vegreville, and Marwayne.

*Government Orders*

The petitioners condemn discrimination against females occurring through gender selection abortion. They note that CBC revealed that ultrasounds are being used in Canada to determine the gender of an unborn child so that girl children, female children, can be aborted. The petitioners call upon the House to end this practice and to condemn this practice of sex-selective abortion.

\* \* \*

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Question No. 15 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 15—**Hon. Geoff Regan:**

With regard to the Standards Council of Canada (SCC): (a) does the SCC consider the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) a commercial entity or a regulatory entity; (b) does the SCC believe that CSA owns any portion of Canadian law; (c) does the SCC believe that the CSA is afforded an exemption, or exemptions, to Canadian law; (d) does the SCC believe that the CSA has the right to restrict public access to Canadian law; (e) what is the average annual value transferred from CSA to provincial governments in payment for those contributions; (f) what percentage of CSA members' payments for Canadian Electrical Code (CEC) influence are diverted to non-CEC activities; (g) does the SCC believe that the CSA practice of trading influence over, or control of, legislative processes in exchange for money or other value consideration is a violation of law; (h) does the SCC believe that the CSA practice of leveraging regulatory authority for commercial advantage is an abuse of regulatory authority; (i) what is the increase in annual revenue experienced by CSA, expressed both in percent and in Canadian dollars, resulting from this decision to tighten the Code development cycle by 25 percent; (j) what is the average annual value of royalty payments made to CSA by each of the government of British Columbia and the government of Ontario in exchange for the right to print the statutes that CSA claims to own and that these jurisdictions have passed into law; (k) does CSA provide access to Canadian law at different costs to different customers according to the values that these customers have at various times paid to CSA; (l) does the SCC assure Parliament that CSA does not leverage any value in any form, including contributions of content and labour, from activities related to the CEC for any of its commercial developments including the CSA Handbook; and (m) does the SCC believe that articles and documentation that are developed as part of a legislative process and that are to constitute part of law in any jurisdiction of Canada may not be concealed from the public for purposes of commercial advantage or financial gain, nor may they be leveraged preferentially, by time or by access or by other advantage, by any entity for purposes external to the legislated passage of those articles or documentation?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Canadian Standards Association, CSA, is not a regulatory entity. CSA is a not-for-profit membership-based association.

With regard to (b), CSA develops voluntary standards that address a variety of needs. CSA contributes to the Canadian regulatory system through its standards, which are referenced in federal and provincial regulations by regulators. There are hundreds of voluntary standards from various standards development organizations, SDOs, incorporated by reference in Canadian regulations. SDOs maintain the intellectual property and copyright of voluntary standards that are referenced in regulations.

With regard to (c), standards development organizations maintain the intellectual property and copyright of voluntary standards that are referenced in regulations.

With regard to (d), standards by nature are proprietary to the standards development organization and, as such, must be purchased

at cost unless an arrangement is made with the regulation-making authority or government for free public access to the standard.

With regard to (e) and (f), the Standards Council of Canada, SCC, is not privy to the financial details of CSA and is unable to provide this information.

With regard to (g) and (h), SCC is not in a position to respond to this question, given that this element is not under the purview of SCC.

With regard to (i) and (j), SCC is not privy to the financial details of CSA, and is unable to provide this information.

With regard to (k), SCC is not privy to the financial details of CSA, and is unable to provide this information.

With regard to (l), the Canadian Electrical Code, the CEC, is published by CSA. CSA is an entity separate from SCC; hence, SCC cannot provide the requested assurance, given that this element is not under the purview of SCC.

With regard to (m), standards by nature are proprietary to the standards development organization, though they may be leveraged to meet public policy objectives, being incorporated by reference in legislation. There may be costs involved in accessing copyrighted material that is incorporated by reference. Consequently, standards may need to be purchased, unless an arrangement is made with the regulation-making authority or government for free public access to the standard.

[English]

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**WAYS AND MEANS**

MOTION NO. 4

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC)** moved that a ways and means motion to introduce an act to replace the Northwest Territories Act to implement certain provisions of the Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement be concurred in.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**An hon. member:** On division.

*Government Orders*

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

● (1020)

### RESPECT FOR COMMUNITIES ACT

The House resumed from November 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in regard to the respect for communities act. As my colleagues on this side of the House have often stated in the course of this debate—and the members opposite, apparently, wholly disagree—Canadian families expect safe and healthy communities in which to raise their children. The respect for communities act would ensure that parents have a say before drug injection sites open in their communities, and it deserves support from all members of this House, regardless of ideological belief. As my colleagues have outlined, the bill would contribute to the public health and public safety of Canadian communities.

I would like to focus in particular on the importance that these amendments place on input from the public, from potentially affected communities and from relevant stakeholders such as public health officials and local law enforcement.

First, here is a little background. As those who have been listening carefully to the debate in the House will know, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act prohibits activities with controlled substances, including possession, import, export, production and distribution of controlled substances except as authorized under the act, its regulations or a section 56 exemption. The CDSA applies to both licit and illicit controlled substances. Section 56 of the act provides the Minister of Health with the authority to grant exemptions from the application of the act or its regulations “...if, in the opinion of the Minister, the exemption is necessary for a medical or scientific purpose or is otherwise in the public interest”.

This section has also been used in the past to allow for routine activities with illicit substances, such as training law-enforcement dogs to detect drugs. However, it has been the case in the past that the same section has been used for activities that were not originally envisioned, those being supervised injection sites.

The respect for communities act, which we are debating today, would require any potential applications for supervised drug injection sites in Canada to address specific criteria before such applications would be considered. It also contains a plethora of additional criteria that, for some reason, the New Democrats are systematically opposed to. These include, of all things, scientific evidence. That, in fact, is the first item in the bill.

Throughout the course of the debate we have had on the bill already, we have heard the opposition members claim that there are numerous studies already existing that provide evidence that injection sites have medical value. That is a completely fair viewpoint. In fact, that makes the job of the applicants easier. They should simply submit those studies. The principal issue here is that many of those studies the New Democrats are referencing refer to the use of individual substances at supervised injection sites, like heroin.

For the members opposite, what about other substances like, perhaps, cocaine or ecstasy? Studies that would speak to the pros or cons of an injection site for heroin would surely not be applicable to those drugs, yet they fall into the same category of illicit substances in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

That is why it is important that the studies and evidence that specifically relate to the activities that are proposed for the individual site be submitted with the application. That is why it is important to also note that these applications would be judged on a case-by-case basis.

No two locations would have exactly the same challenges. This is why it is important that the minister be aware of the issues facing each and every individual proposed site, so that a fair decision based on the facts can be rendered for every unique situation.

Given that no current statutory framework exists for such applications, this legislation would not only address a current gap but would also ensure that relevant community voices are heard in the process, as required by the 2011 ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada on the subject. Given the serious risks associated with the use and creation of illicit substances, our government agrees with the Supreme Court that exemptions under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to undertake activities with them at a supervised injection site should be limited to exceptional circumstances, only once rigorous criteria have been addressed.

One of the criteria our government is proposing that follows the court's ruling is that any applicant seeking an exemption for activities involving illicit substances at a supervised injection site must provide evidence of community consultations from a broad range of groups from the municipality in which the site would be located. This would include a summary of the opinions of community groups on the proposed activities, as well as copies of all written submissions received and steps that would be taken to address any relevant concerns that are raised during the consultations. The Supreme Court indicated that the minister must take into account these expressions of community support or opposition, if any, when considering an application for an exemption. How the NDP can oppose a requirement that is mandated by the Supreme Court is beyond me.

The proposed legislation would provide an opportunity for this community input into the application process related to supervised injection sites. It would provide greater transparency to the process. It would provide the minister with important information needed to assess the applications on a case-by-case basis.

● (1025)

This bill demonstrates once again that listening to local voices, maintaining safe communities and protecting public health are top priorities for this government, and they should be top priorities for anybody in this House.

*Government Orders*

Under the proposed approach, applicants for supervised drug injection sites would need to provide information outlining the views of a number of key community stakeholders who are considered relevant to the success or failure of a site. This would include stakeholders such as municipal leaders, the lead public health professional in the province or territory, the licensing bodies for physicians and nurses in that province or territory, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for health and public safety and, of course, the head of local law enforcement. This just makes sense.

As the president of the Canadian Police Association has said:

While treating drug addiction is an important goal, my experience in Vancouver is that these sites also lead to an increase in criminal behaviour and disorder in the surrounding community and have a significant impact on police resources, and that's why it would be vital for the views of local police to be taken into account.

In this new approach, the Minister of Health would have the authority to post a notice of application regarding any exemption application received related to a supervised consumption site for a 90-day public comment period to allow members of the public to provide their views. This public comment period would provide an opportunity for a broad range of stakeholders to make their views known to the minister. Any relevant feedback would be taken into account by the minister as she considers the application for an exemption.

This information would be combined with other rigorous application criteria intended to balance public health and public safety considerations. It would allow the minister to make an informed decision when considering an exemption application for activities with illicit substances at a supervised injection site.

To reiterate, these application criteria that would be required under the proposed legislation build upon the factors outlined in the 2011 Supreme Court of Canada decision.

In conclusion, given the serious risks involved, our government believes that any application involving illicit drugs under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act must be given serious and careful assessment. This legislation is designed to ensure a rigorous approach to future applications for exemptions to conduct activities with illicit substances at supervised consumption sites. It would provide greater clarity concerning the application process, and it would provide crucial information to the minister about the wishes and views of the local communities that could potentially be affected by the proposed site.

The bill would help protect the health and safety of Canadians and balance this with consideration of the public health impacts related to illicit drug use in accordance with the Supreme Court ruling. It would also ensure that the voices of local communities are heard and taken into account in the decisions that affect them.

I urge every member of the House to vote in favour of the proposed legislative changes debated here today to help ensure that our government can continue to keep communities safe and abide by the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada.

With that, I move:

That this question be now put.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, suddenly the Conservatives have two new-found loves.

One is to respect the local voices in communities that may be impacted by a proposal. I do not remember any of that interest when we were talking about pipelines or resource development coming from the Conservatives. Actually, we see the reverse when they make the entrance for public opinion and views even more restricted in any proposal having to do with oil pipelines. However, when it comes to saving lives, as is proposed by the InSite project in Vancouver, my friend says that we are entitled to our opinions.

Well, we are entitled to our facts, and the facts are that InSite has worked and has been supported by Conservative and left-wing mayors in that city as well as the chiefs of police. It is so confusing to me that the Conservatives want to take away something that works.

The second new-found love is to respect the Supreme Court of Canada. What an amazing moment that the Conservatives are suddenly interested in the views of the Supreme Court of Canada, because we see them so often introducing legislation that is unconstitutional and will be challenged in court, is challenged in the Supreme Court and is defeated at the Supreme Court. We had one just two weeks ago on trying to cut down on gun violence.

The Conservatives are not listening to their own constitutional experts, but rather they have the photo op and pretend to the public that they are doing something about crime, gun safety or any of those types of issues. Then they move in legislation that they know full well would not ever be realized in actual law.

My question to my friend is: Is this new-found consideration both for the court and for the opinion of the public going to extend beyond this one particular bill?

Let us be honest here. What the government is doing in this legislation is to ensure that never again would a safe injection site be built in Canada. That is what the real purpose of this legislation is: creating criteria that are impossible to meet, ensuring that these programs will never come to pass.

• (1030)

**Hon. Laurie Hawn:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my cynical friend from Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his comments.

What we have an abiding—not new-found—love for is common sense and balance. My friend calls the criteria impossible to meet. The court outlined factors that the minister must consider for applications. They seem like common sense to me: the impact of such a facility on crime rates; the local conditions indicating a need for such a site; the regulatory structure in place to support the facility; the resources available to support its maintenance; and the expression of community support or opposition. None of those sounds radical to me.



*Government Orders*

My friend mentions support from various folks. That is a fair comment because there are some. I will remind the House of the comments by the president of the Canadian Police Association that I quoted in my speech, which basically said it is vital for the views of local police to be taken into account, among other things. Therefore, this is not a new-found love for anything other than simple common sense and balance.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am intrigued by the quickness and haphazard way the bill was developed. It appears to be a knee-jerk reaction to losing the decision of the Supreme Court, which stated that under certain conditions safe injection sites are not necessarily a bad idea.

At one point, my riding was considered for an injection site. I think community involvement is something that every potential safe injection site looks for.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague this question, in terms of the dangers of not having a safe injection site, where needles are used haphazardly all over the place. I was involved in a cleanup project with an organization. We found literally dozens of needles in parks where kids play. Had there been a safe injection site, those needles would have been disposed of in a way that does not harm or threaten our children. That protects our community plus offers the opportunity for those individuals who are under duress or the problems of substance abuse to potentially find their way to a better place. Is this not protecting our communities? Is this not helping our communities?

**Hon. Laurie Hawn:** Mr. Speaker, I respect my hon. friend's opinion. However, I will take a bit of exception to the suggestion that there are no needles in the neighbourhood around safe injection sites. In Edmonton, we do not have a safe injection site. That is a valid point. However, it has been our experience that the needles are out there regardless of whether or not there is a safe injection site. It may affect a very small amount of the total out there, but it really does not impact or affect the hazard of needles in the community.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-2, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. For members representing urban communities, like mine in Sudbury, this is a very significant and potentially dangerous piece of legislation, particularly as communities continue to see intravenous drug use taking place in outdoor public spaces.

There is also a very important public health component of this legislation, particularly as it relates to communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS. As the former co-chair of the HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis Parliamentary Caucus, I think some of the concerns of people on the front lines of the fight against HIV/AIDS merit strong consideration before this legislation is allowed to move forward.

Let me begin by focusing my comments on what this legislation would seek to do and how the changes to Canada's regulatory framework surrounding safe injection sites may actually contravene the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada on this subject. Essentially, what Bill C-2 is proposing is a complete reworking of the current framework governing safe injection sites in Canada by creating a lengthy and arduous list of criteria that supervised injection sites would need to meet before the minister would grant

them an exemption to operate under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Among the numerous new provisions that would be included in the application process, many seem to be designed solely for the purpose of slowing down the process itself, while others, such as principles the minister must adhere to before approving an application, seem to be intended as a means of giving the minister unilateral power to accept or reject a new application. Essentially, these new criteria would make it much more onerous for organizations to open safe injection sites in Canada.

What is most troubling about this exhaustive set of new application criteria is the fact that this legislation seems to be an attempt to circumvent the Supreme Court's decision on this matter by creating a system that is so onerous and arbitrary that the minister could subjectively reject applications at his or her discretion.

In its 2011 decision, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the minister's decision to close Vancouver-based InSite violated its patients' charter rights and that the minister's decision was arbitrary, undermining the very purposes of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, which includes public health and safety. Here the court based its judgment on section 7 of the charter, and stated:

The infringement at stake is serious; it threatens the health, indeed the lives, of the claimants and others like them. The grave consequences that might result from a lapse in the current constitutional exemption for InSite cannot be ignored. These claimants would be cast back into the application process they have tried and failed at, and made to await the Minister's decision based on a reconsideration of the same facts.

Yet here we are, not even two years later, facing a subversive attempt to undermine the decision of the court with a bill designed to find a backdoor means of closing down supervised injection sites. For instance, despite already having the Supreme Court of Canada rule in favour of its continued operation, InSite will now have to once again apply for a section 56 exemption under the new criteria. This means that InSite is being asked to validate its existence once again and that the minister can still arbitrarily shut down the institution.

This speaks to the heart of why I am so concerned about the way this process is unfolding. Without pulling punches, it is clear that Bill C-2 is part of a larger attempt by the Conservatives to align all government policies and programs with their anti-drug and abstinence ideals. They are slowly removing all avenues for Canadians to safely address their addictions at safe injection sites and to access medical marijuana for therapeutic needs.

With the Conservatives' agenda, we are turning back the clock on public health achievements and community benefits gained from harm reduction programs that have been proven to be successful over the past two decades.

*Government Orders*

• (1035)

In an attempt to garner support for the bill, Conservatives have been suggesting that it should be passed, because it will help keep heroin out of our backyards. However, the bill will make it almost impossible to open safe injection sites. It will actually put intravenous drug users back into public spaces in certain communities and make it more difficult to safely remove this activity from communities that do not currently house a supervised injection site.

Let me use a local example from my great community of Sudbury to illustrate how backward the government's thinking is on this issue. The Point, Sudbury's needle exchange program, has for the last 20 years supplied clean needles to reduce harm to intravenous drug users. While the majority of those needles are returned after they are used, some still end up on the ground. This means that each year, as the snow melts across my city, the thaw tends to reveal hundreds of discarded needles in our city's parks, playgrounds, and other similar public spaces.

Some Conservatives might cite this as a prime example of why we, as legislators, should be making it more onerous for intravenous drug users to access clean needles. However, I believe that it underscores that we have not created an effective system that allows these individuals to access clean needles in a space removed from the public so that used needles are not carelessly discarded on our city's streets. Evidence from Vancouver's experience with InSite supports this belief, as there was a significant drop in the number of discarded syringes, injection-related litter, and people injecting on the streets one year after InSite opened.

While no organization in my community has thus far come forward with an application to open a supervised injection site, should one eventually come forward with an application, the government's desire to make the process more onerous would actually reverse course on a 20-year public health trajectory. It would once again lead to a higher threat from discarded needles, and more importantly, from the threat of deadly communicable diseases, such as HIV and AIDS.

I mentioned previously my involvement in parliamentary initiatives related to HIV and AIDS. Given this experience, I firmly believe that the most disturbing thing about what Bill C-2 is proposing is the impact it would have on the spread of communicable diseases. For instance, the Pivot Legal Society, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, and the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition have jointly stated:

[Bill C-2] is an irresponsible initiative that ignores both the extensive evidence that such health services are needed and effective, and the human rights of Canadians with addictions.... It is unethical, unconstitutional and damaging to both public health and public purse to block access to supervised consumption services.

Once again, empirical evidence confirms the efficiency of supervised injection sites in preventing the spread of communicable diseases. Drug users who use InSite are 70% less likely to share needles, and reducing needle sharing has been listed as an international best practice to reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS.

In conclusion, it is worth highlighting that safe injection sites currently operate in 70 cities in six European countries and in Australia. The experience in these cases, as with InSite, has been positive for drug users, because of health improvements; for the

surrounding communities; and for reducing the transmission rates of HIV/AIDS.

By making the application process more onerous and arbitrary, the Conservatives are using processes as a means of clandestinely supporting their ideological beliefs regarding the morality of drug use, ultimately threatening more than 20 years of evidence-based public health policy. New Democrats support the use of evidence-based decision-making, and for this reason, I will not be supporting this ideologically driven attempt to skirt the decision of Canada's highest court.

• (1040)

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to forgive my colleague from Sudbury, whom I have worked with very positively in a number of different dimensions, for inferring that there is some alternative intention of the bill.

He began his speech by mentioning a framework for supervised injection sites. In fact, the real issue is that there is no framework. He refers to section 56, which simply provides an opportunity to get an exemption for research on illicit drugs or for use with things like sniffer dogs. There is no framework at all right now.

Bill C-2 is the first attempt to put a framework in place for supervised injection sites. Would he not agree that some of the aspects of the bill should be in place to make sure that the community has a say and that police, the municipality, and the provincial health officer have a say in where these sites go, when we are talking about people who are hopped up on illicit drugs and who are going to be leaving these sites and going into communities?

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague should not worry about apologizing. I know that we are on different sides of the House, but what we are having is a good debate on a subject that is important for all Canadians.

What we are seeing in the bill would change a system that is working. If we are actually helping individuals who have addictions, then let us keep moving forward on this.

InSite, located in Vancouver, is the only site in Canada. Since it opened, we have seen a 35% decrease in overdose deaths. InSite has been shown to decrease crime, communicable disease infection rates, and relapse rates for drugs users. This is coming from the community. The community is involved in it. We do not want to make it more onerous and leave it in the minister's hands to make an arbitrary decision, when the community is already saying that this site is working for them.

We need to continue to promote facilities like InSite to help those who are addicted.

• (1045)

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his very cogent speech on this topic, which I spoke about previously in the House.

*Government Orders*

To come back to the issue of what the Supreme Court determined, it is really important for everyone in this place to understand exactly what the Supreme Court said in this case. The Supreme Court was very clear that in this case, a declaration of the law was not sufficient. The matter was so serious, because of what the government was trying to do to provide public health safety, that it issued an order of mandamus, which does not occur very often.

The Supreme Court said that the infringement at stake, meaning from the government trying to shut down InSite, was so serious “it threatens the health, indeed the lives, of the claimants and others like them”. Therefore, an order of mandamus was necessary.

The Supreme Court was clear that the government, in responding to its direction, must take a balanced approach. It must look at the interests of the community, which the government claims it is looking at, but must balance them with the charter, or in other words, the rights of those who are suffering from a drug addiction where there are measures to also protect the community from this.

The Supreme Court actually directed the government to put in place balanced criteria. When we look at this legislation, there is the complete opposite of balance. We have almost 40 requirements that must be met before there can be an InSite-type of location. That is not balance. It is not simply about giving a voice to communities, which is normally done on every other matter by the local government.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-2 directly defies the 2011 Supreme Court ruling, which called on the minister to consider these exemptions for safe injection sites based on a balance between public health and safety. It called on the minister to consider all the evidence on the benefits of safe injection sites, rather than setting out a lengthy list of principles by which to apply judgment.

What we are calling it on this side of the House is a backdoor attempt to change the Supreme Court decision. We need to ensure that we actually find ways to continue to help facilities like InSite, because the job it is doing in the community of Vancouver is coming from the community, and it is doing a good job.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, indeed, it is an honour for me to stand here to discuss this particular issue. I have done a bit of research in the past little while, as I am not familiar with the areas in question, though I have experienced living around it. I did live in Vancouver for some time.

I became interested, after reading the evidence put forward and the decision by the Supreme Court, in the issue of harm reduction. Some time ago, I was in Europe with a delegation and we were talking about harm reduction in a very broad sense. We were exploring the best practices to reduce harm in big cities and to reduce drug abuse and how we could do it in a very smart way, not necessarily punitive all the time. Of course, there has to be certain punishment involved when it comes to drug abuse, but we certainly have to enable people to put themselves in better places by reducing harm. That is where the focus should be. I heard compelling reasons as to why harm reduction should be at the centre of this.

In this particular bill, there is talk of frameworks so that these sites could exist and that there would be rules to follow in order for the sites to do what it is they do, which I believe is good work. As my

hon. colleague just pointed out, though, 40 requirements in Bill C-2 for InSite to exist really straps these people into positions—

**Mr. Dan Harris:** Too bad there weren't more requirements for the Senate.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** There you go.

Basically, what we are looking at here is something that is onerous for these people to exist. We are scrambling now. Before the bill becomes law, hopefully we can engage members in debate and try to put some reason to this.

Bill C-2, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, would do the following:

- (a) create a separate exemption regime for activities involving the use of a controlled substance or precursor that is obtained in a manner not authorized under this Act;
- (b) specify the purposes for which an exemption may be granted for those activities; and
- (c) set out the information that must be submitted to the Minister of Health before the Minister may consider an application for an exemption in relation to a supervised consumption site.

This is where things start to fall off the rails, as it were, because it is an incredibly overly prescriptive way of trying to reduce harm in the cities and the impact drug abuse has on all of our communities, whether they are big cities or small towns. Very few people in this country have not had the experience of seeing what heavy drug abuse can do to communities and families.

Liberals feel that the bill far exceeds the 2011 Supreme Court of Canada ruling regarding InSite. We believe this is an ideological bill from a government always opposed to evidence-based harm reduction measures, such as safe injections sites, as I talked about earlier. Safe injection sites must be part of a broader evidence-based national drug policy that saves lives, reduces harm and promotes public health. The criteria that must accompany an application as listed in this particular bill are so cumbersome that it raises serious concerns as to whether any future site could be established in Canada, as my colleague from Alberta pointed out about the 40 requirements involved here.

We support the need to consult broadly and work in conjunction with provincial and municipal governments, public health authorities, business associates, and of course, the public. The engagement with other levels of government is not just important in this particular matter, but in all particular matters these days. The idea of engaging the provinces on much broader issues seems to be lost. I cannot remember the last time this country engaged with the provinces, certainly with the head of state of each province, with the first ministers involved, to allow them, in a public manner, to engage in a national issue. This is another one of these things.

It was initially launched as an experiment that has proven to be successful. I am talking about InSite, of course. It has saved lives and improved health and communities and the incidence of drug use and crime in the surrounding area. The Vancouver police supports InSite, as well as the City of Vancouver and the British Columbia government. The minister has never even stepped into Vancouver's InSite and her legislation is based on ideology and not evidence.

*Government Orders*

Now we go back to the theme once more of evidence-based policy.

• (1050)

I have been here nine years and the Conservatives have been in government for about seven years. It seems to me that year after year those who work so diligently to give us the evidence upon which we can base our decisions have had numerous protests. Not just when it comes to InSite, but also in the case of the Library and Archives, the Meteorological Service of Canada, Statistics Canada. All these employees have high amounts of education and want to do their jobs in the best manner possible, yet each and every time policy seems to run away from what we consider to be evidence-based policy or at least the making of decisions and drafting of policy with the latest data and facts in mind, which are given to us by our experts.

This is just another example. Harm reduction is actually taking place in a supervised site. Now, in order for them to exist and do what they do best, we find ourselves in the situation where the government wants to strap them down. It is almost as if they want to use, I believe the term is, “regulation creep”, where the government would allow regulations to be imposed that would suffocate a particular incentive or a project, which has been successful in making our communities better.

That is the unfortunate part because when these regulations take hold, as was pointed out, the 40 criteria are going to make it near impossible for these places to exist. The Vancouver police certainly would not be happy, and the Province of British Columbia feels much the same.

Only an hour after the legislation was introduced, Conservative campaign director, Jenni Byrne issued a crass and misleading fundraising letter to supporters stating that the Liberals and the NDP want addicts to shoot up heroin in backyards in communities all across the country.

Now we have come to the nub of the issue. This is what it is all about. It is not about creating a framework for harm reduction. This is a 30-second ad or a tweet of less than 140 characters that talks about how good the Conservatives are and how bad we are. The Conservatives are chasing after this headline. Lost in the headlines would be a lot of drug abuse taking place in the dark shadows once more.

This site reduces the harm and brings it under control so that these communities can be better. It will not eradicate the issue. Nothing can eradicate the issue of drug abuse.

Certainly if evidence-based policy tells us that this is making a difference in our communities, making our streets safer, a phrase the Conservatives use all the time, why would they want to chase after a headline with a fundraising letter and a notice in Canadians' post office boxes geared toward an election campaign, when there is no election campaign? It smacks of desperation, and it is unfortunate that this is a ploy the Conservatives are using. I am not going to blame every member in the House for engaging in that. There are a lot of people on all sides of the House who, when they see it in their post office box, are obviously disappointed, and they just roll their eyes.

However, we are affected by this. We need to have a mature debate. I hope the idea of this is not to go after a headline and score some cheap political points. I say, “I hope.” We can only hold out for hope.

We support evidence-based policies to reduce harm and protect public safety. These are paramount. They should always be paramount. A 2011 Supreme Court ruling declared the Minister of Health's 2008 decision not to grant an extension of the exemption of section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, which had allowed Vancouver's safe injection site, a safe consumption site, to operate since September 2003, had violated section 7 of the charter rights. That is:

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

• (1055)

Determining whether there has been a breach of section 7 involves a two-part analysis that courts considering potential section 7 violations must ask. First, is there a deprivation of the right to life, liberty or security? Second, if so, is the deprivation in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice? Therein lies the core of the issue.

This is about harm reduction and this about the rights of communities to reduce harm and to reduce drug abuse.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. Liberal colleague, but first I would like to thank him for mentioning the importance of harm reduction so many times.

Yesterday the Standing Committee on Health was examining the issue of prescription drug abuse. Witnesses from the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Nurses Association and the College of Family Physicians of Canada all agreed that the government should correct the mistake it made in 2007 when it removed the fourth pillar from the government's anti-drug strategy, which is harm reduction.

My question is very simple. He already mentioned that the fourth pillar was eliminated from the strategy based on ideology.

Can he explain why the Conservatives and people on the right oppose the notion of helping people who are struggling, who might not yet be ready to begin treatment, and who could be helped through harm reduction strategies such as a supervised injection site?

• (1100)

[*English*]

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very valid point. This issue tends to divide itself along ideological lines, not just in Canada but also in the United States and Europe. As I mentioned earlier, I went to Europe and I found that a lot of people look at the idea of harm reduction and in particular look at these supervised sites as some kind of promotional or enabling mechanism to allow people to continue their bad practices.

*Government Orders*

However, what I find, which is promising, is that when people such as the hon. colleague get in front of people who are the practitioners, the physicians, the nurses, the health officers, the people who live in Vancouver on the east side, the councillors and politicians within Vancouver, when they are exposed to the evidence I would say the vast majority of them, if not all of them, change their attitudes toward it.

There is nothing wrong with changing our attitudes toward an evidence-based policy that is put in front of us. We change our minds a lot around here. The problem is that we all fault each other for doing it.

We must look at the evidence in this case. As my colleague points out, in that committee, just listen to the people who deal with this day in and day out. Here we are as politicians making decisions based on what we read on paper, but the police of Vancouver say it is the way to go. Now if the police are saying it, there has to be something to this.

To address my colleague's question, I hope more of these right-wing ideological people get more exposed to the evidence, as he was.

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think the debate is not one of ideology, it is one of understanding public policy and the nature of what a broad vision of public safety is, not only in what the member talked about in terms of harm reduction but also in the community that he is questioning, the community where such a site would be.

I mentioned to one of my colleagues earlier the fact that there is no framework right now for a supervised injection site.

Presently there are just two aspects in section 56 and they are explicitly for research and for things like using illicit drugs when sniffer dogs are being trained, et cetera. Does the member not think that there should be some framework for a site that has such a high level of risk so that communities can have the input from police, councillors, the general public, the provincial health authority? Does he not think that is something that should be necessary?

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the member is trying to say about the framework. There is no doubt it. Any plan that we want to carry out that reduces harm has to have an established framework as such.

However, the requirements in the bill, and let us talk about the bill for a moment, are so prescriptive and overly restrictive, we are starting to read between the lines that Conservatives do not want it to exist. I would not kill a mouse with a bazooka, pardon the analogy, but nonetheless, it is the only analogy I have right now, because the Conservatives are trying to take the very spirit of harm reduction out of these supervised sites with an overly prescriptive bill.

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-2, an Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. In listening to the debate in the House, it is good we are having it.

Today, I would like to talk about the history of the Vancouver safe injection site, or the harm reduction site, because it adds to the debate on how we might move forward with future sites.

If I have time, I will also talk a bit about the scientific evidence that backs up the creation and continual operation of these sites because as a science and tech critic that is something I look at quite regularly.

In looking at the history of the safe injection site in Vancouver, the theme would be local choice. I have lived very close to the site. I know people who manage the site. When I was a professor at SFU, I would take students to the site when there were no clients there. I have known people who have used the site.

Sometimes when we talk about the facility in the House, we tend to overstate what it is. I am not sure if any of my colleagues on the other side have had a chance to visit the safe injection site, but I think they would be amazed at how innocuous it is. There is a lot to look at when walking down Hastings Street because it is a very active community. However, one would walk right by the site because there are no flashing lights which say "Inject heroin here". It is a medical facility.

When one enters through its doors, it looks kind of like a hair salon. It has maybe up to 15 stainless steel booths with mirrors in front of them, bright lights, chairs and a nurse's station so when people are injecting there they are using clean needles and are being supervised. If they overdose, they can be rescued. There is also a room where they can relax and adjust to the effects of the drug. Then they move out. It is not a scary place. It is a place of comfort for a lot of people. That is why the history of this site is so important.

The safe injection site was created in Vancouver because there was a policy problem that emerged in the late eighties and early nineties where hundreds of bodies were being pulled out of hotels in the Downtown Eastside. I know this because I had spoken with Senator Larry Campbell, who was the coroner. He said that he would go into hotels in the Downtown Eastside and would pull dead bodies out. This was happening over and over again, mainly because of overdoses.

The mayor of Vancouver at the time was Philip Owen. He was in the Non-Partisan Association, which is the name of the party. It is a coalition of federal Liberals and federal Conservatives. He was a three term mayor at that point. I would describe him, and I think he would agree, as a very Christian man. He has a predilection for ballroom dancing, but is a deeply religious man who, as mayor of the city, felt that he had to address this. What had happened simultaneously was that a number of addicts had started the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users, which was an unofficial safe injection site. Mayor Philip Owen, who was a good policy maker, decided to meet with those people and ask them what their problems were. I do not want to speak for him, but some of the questions he was facing were some of the questions my colleagues on the other side have. The idea of providing a safe site for people to inject clashes with the values they hold.

*Government Orders*

Philip Owen is a brave man. He commissioned a study on harm reduction and put it through council as official policy. It was voted through Vancouver city council. I believe the party then kicked him out as leader. It said that there were people with other ambitions who decided to move against him. It became the main debate of the 2002 civic election in Vancouver, which featured Larry Campbell, who had moved from coroner to mayoralty candidate, versus Jennifer Clarke, another mayoralty candidate. The debate throughout that whole election was about this safe injection site.

● (1105)

Larry Campbell ran for a party called COPE that had really never in the history controlled an absolute majority on council. He won, and that is why we have InSite today. Larry Campbell championed this cause, won an election on it, convinced all the local area residents and merchants, police, emergency services, that this was necessary and, as we heard, in 2003, this site was created.

The bill is problematic because it is too prescriptive.

If we listen to the story about how InSite was developed in Vancouver, it was a local choice. However, these local choices sometimes need some flexibility in terms of development. The are really driven locally anyway.

If we look at the funding of who provides these facilities, this is also co-operative and negotiated. We have federal, provincial, municipal agencies. We have police forces. We already have the local community negotiating. I can tell members that if a local community does not want a safe injection site, it will not get it, whatever federal regulation because it is solely driven by a local policy problem.

What now we have in Vancouver I think has been around the world in other places too. It is not like we invented this in Vancouver. We borrow from other places around the world. We have a facility where people can go and inject their drugs safely, under supervision, and then get on with their lives.

Heroin is a bugaboo. It is an illegal substance. However, I think the question that Philip Owen would have asked himself is what the alternatives were. I think the other side perhaps would prefer abstinence.

If somebody is a heroin addict and has perhaps other mental health issues and has a low income, it is very difficult, impossible actually, to safely go from being a heroin user to a non-heroin user overnight, especially because there are hardly any facilities for that person to do it.

It is about management. That is really what these sites do is help manage these problems that keep people alive.

My core belief is an idea called “intrinsic equality”, meaning that everybody's life is worth the same. Wayne Gretzky is not worth five drug users. Everybody's life is worth the same. It is found in many religions, but I am not coming at it from a religious perspective, but more of a philosophical perspective; all lives are of equal worth.

I think this is the problem Philip Owen would have faced. I believe life, in his perspective, would have been a sacred thing that is worth protecting. “If I do not go forward with this policy, people are

going to die. Can I have that on my conscience?” I think the answer was no. This safe injection site is a simple policy solution to manage our problem that could not be eradicated.

It is a very mature way of looking at things and I am very grateful.

It is not for every community because there is not the need. This is why a local community choices are so important.

I would have believed the bill was a genuine attempt if the other side had not tried for so many years to shut down the safe injection site in Vancouver, indeed, writing fundraising letters about how it was shutting it down and so forth.

If this had been entered much earlier in the debate, it would have been something I would have considered,. However, my colleagues are right, that this is not a genuine attempt to open this debate. It is disappointing.

Again, I would ask my colleagues to reconsider, to visit the site themselves to see how innocuous it is and how it is helping people and bringing the community together in a positive way, in a community that is suffering greatly at times.

● (1110)

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for sharing a lot of the history of InSite. It is fantastic to hear how that unfolded and how we ended up with the site in Vancouver.

One of the interesting things we are hearing from the other side is a lot of talk about communities and how communities need to have their voices heard. We are representing the community. The member comes from the community where this site is located.

Once upon a time, I had the opportunity to live in the Vancouver area, in the city of north Vancouver, and worked in the Downtown Eastside quite often. I would see individuals on the street in the 1990s with needles in their arms. One of the things that the social workers and the folks in the Downtown Eastside would say was that they wished they had a facility where they could at least monitor these people to ensure they were not dying and give them an opportunity to know that treatment was there, where they knew they could step into a building, not feel judged, do what they had to do safely and then be offered treatment if they were ready for it. InSite is doing that.

Could my colleague comment on that?

● (1115)

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my grand colleague from Sudbury, who I enjoy working with on the industry committee.

*Government Orders*

He is exactly right. It is important to know that this facility is not just a place where addicts go, inject and then leave. It is also a place where they can get help. If we talk to people who are or have been heroin addicts, the last thing they want to do is continue with this. They do not want to be heroin addicts. It is not something that they choose; it is usually because of depression or other reasons why people get addicted to these drugs. They desperately want to be able to manage their problem to get their lives back under control and, ultimately, reduce their dependency.

That is exactly what facilities such as this do. They give people options that they do not think they had. They keep people alive. They stop people from taking water out of mud puddles and injecting it into themselves.

It really is a win-win and it saves significant amounts of money, if that is important. It should be a consideration.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his insight, no pun intended, into what has proven to be quite a successful community engagement in Vancouver.

I would challenge anybody in the House to find any drug user who does drugs because he or she wants to or because it would be a good time. Most, if not all, drug users are people who have scars, wounds and things in their lives that they want to hide from.

It seems to me that any legislation on this level should be coming from the perspective of how we can help organizations like this integrate into the community. How can we help organizations like this work with the community so they can serve the community, as opposed to putting up barriers and making it more difficult for organizations like this to exist?

I would like my hon. colleague to comment on that.

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart:** Mr. Speaker, the questions are good today and I really hope they add to the debate.

Safe injection sites, again, are a flashpoint for debate just because they are new. They are new because people's thinking on them has started to change, mainly because of the great scientific evidence that we have had. Again, these are peer-reviewed studies that are in international scientific journals which stem from the work that has been done in the Vancouver site, as well as sites all around the world.

We have to pay attention to this evidence, because people are suffering. It is not just the people who are immediately affected by addiction, it is the communities. If we were in the Downtown Eastside before the safe injection site was put in place, we would see a community that was in real pain and chaos. After the safe injection site, it is not totally fixed, but the harm has been reduced.

That is really the key here. When we went from thinking about it as a criminal matter to a health matter, that was when the debate started to change and we had a more mature debate about it. I hope we can do that in the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I sit on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, and yesterday we were considering a somewhat similar issue, namely how to prevent prescription drug abuse.

Witnesses included health experts from the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Nurses Association and the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

These three organizations are the best of the best and represent thousands of health professionals across Canada in all provinces and territories, including urban communities, which struggle with problems of abuse of both prescription and non-prescription drugs, and rural areas. We must not bury our heads in the sand—drugs are everywhere in Canada.

In Saguenay and Chicoutimi, where I grew up, it was said there were both fewer drugs and fewer kinds of drugs, in comparison with major cities like Montreal and Quebec City. In reality, I knew people who used when I was in high school. In short, we should not delude ourselves: drugs are everywhere in Canada.

Until 2007, harm reduction was the fourth pillar of the national anti-drug strategy. The Conservative government unfortunately decided to remove it to focus only on prevention, treatment and enforcement of Canadian laws.

By removing the harm reduction element, the Conservative government has turned a blind eye to an entire category of people, and I am referring to those who are addicted to hard drugs. These people are caught in a downward spiral and feel they are trapped in a hole where their world becomes darker and darker every day. Although they may want to escape from drug abuse, they are not prepared to do so. These people are not mentally or physically able to take the initiative to seek treatment for their addictions.

However, the NDP and I—and I assume the Liberals agree as well—believe that we should not abandon these people. They are Canadians. They may be our brothers, our sisters, our children, adults or parents. No one should be left behind in Canada.

That is why I insist that the Conservative government, or the next government in 2015, which I hope will not be Conservative, put harm reduction back in the national anti-drug strategy.

This is the second time that I am speaking about Bill C-2. For several days, the Conservatives have been really criticizing Canada's only supervised injection site, InSite, which is located in Vancouver. I would like to know what exactly is so bad about it, other than the fact that they want to scare people with campaigns against heroin.

For example, the Conservative government recently launched an Internet campaign called, "Keep heroin out of our backyards". If we ask parents with children, or even adults without children or single people if they want heroin near their homes, no one would say they want heroin in their neighbourhood, or their downtown or their rural area, except maybe for those who do not understand the issue.

No one wants to promote the use of heroin and hard or soft drugs in Canada, although the Liberal party wants to promote soft drugs. The NDP is more concerned with the marginalized. Drug addicts are marginalized and we must help them.

*Government Orders*

Yesterday, the Standing Committee on Health heard from some excellent witnesses from the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Nurses Association, and the College of Family Physicians of Canada. I asked all of them the same question. I asked them if they believe that the government should put harm reduction back in the national drug strategy. They all answered yes.

• (1120)

I would like to ask the Conservatives if they have any expertise in health. Harm reduction can only be achieved if we take care of people with serious drug problems. We cannot make them see reason by simply telling them to stop using drugs. We have to help them.

Places like InSite help by taking in heroin addicts and giving them clean needles. If those addicts are on the street and they share needles, cases of hepatitis A, B and C and HIV will increase and it will cost Canadians and the provincial health care systems dearly.

Supervised injection sites take in drug addicts, but they bring their own drugs. I want to reassure the public that the government is not buying drugs for the people who uses these sites.

There are nurses and therapists at these sites to help the addicts get off drugs. They take the addicts as they are and guide them, not necessarily to a cure, but to a light at the end of the tunnel.

A number of other problems are associated with living in the world of drugs, such as homelessness and prostitution, which people enter into in order to pay for drugs. When a person spends their entire paycheck—if they have one—on drugs, then they cannot put \$300 or \$500 aside for housing. When people are deeply into drugs, they are no longer able to work. They leave the job market and end up on the streets.

Do my Conservative colleagues want people with drug problems to be on the street? The answer is no. The slogan for the Conservatives' campaign is “Keep heroin out of our backyards”. I agree. I do not want people to use drugs and leave needles in the parks in my neighbourhood. No one wants that, but we have to help those people.

The Canadian Medical Association has this to say about Bill C-2:

Supervised injection programs are an important harm reduction strategy. Harm reduction is a central pillar in a comprehensive public health approach to disease prevention and health promotion.

I would ask the Conservative Party to think about that before the upcoming vote on this bill.

I will now share a quote from the Canadian Nurses Association:

Evidence demonstrates that supervised injection sites and other harm reduction programs bring critical health and social services to vulnerable populations—especially those experiencing poverty, mental illness and homelessness.

A government truly committed to public health and safety would work to enhance access to prevention and treatment services—instead of building more barriers.

I have to wonder what is behind this. Why have the Conservatives been fighting since 2007 to block any approaches and treatments based on harm reduction?

There may be an answer, and I think it is important to share. Bill C-2 is part of the Conservatives' greater plan to bring all government programs and policies in line with their own anti-drug and abstinence ideals. I am also against drugs, but the Conservatives'

methods are unsound and will have consequences for the Canadian public.

The Conservatives are slowly eliminating all the ways for Canadians to safely access supervised injection sites and for people with terminal cancer to access medical marijuana, for example. I think it makes sense to enable these people to ease their suffering.

In conclusion, the Conservatives' plan will undo all the progress that has been made in public health and will nullify the benefits that communities have experienced from harm reduction programs over the past 20 years. I thank the Conservative government for setting Canadians back and abandoning them. That was sarcasm, by the way.

• (1125)

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when I was young, my father was a teacher at Samuel Hearne Senior Public School. The school engaged in regular community cleanups as part of its civic engagement with its local community. Of course, this meant going into different parts of the neighbourhood to clean up discarded trash. Something very serious happened during one of those days: my father, while picking up a pile of garbage, was pricked by a discarded syringe.

This was the late 1980s. I was nine or 10 years old at the time, and that was really my first experience in discovering things such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and other communicable diseases, which my father then had to get tested for because of that discarded syringe.

I would like to ask the member about the harm reduction and increased safety in communities that could be reached by having supervised injection sites available for intravenous drug users so that they could get clean syringes and not be discarding them in alleyways, parks, and other public spaces where teachers or children could be harmed by them.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Dany Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my NDP colleague for that excellent question.

I have met his father and he is a remarkable man. As a citizen, teacher and mentor for the young people in his class, he has made an effort to protect the environment, and I am grateful for that. I am also grateful that he is teaching our young people good values, such as taking care of their neighbourhoods and society and picking up litter.



*Government Orders*

The government intends to close down supervised injection sites. I know that there are no safe injection sites in the riding represented by my colleague. A number of cities in Canada, such as Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal, are interested in opening such sites. Eventually, perhaps he will be interested in having such a site in his area of the country. If Canada prevents supervised injection sites from opening, what happened to the hon. member's father will happen again. Drug addicts are not going to put their dirty needles in the nice little yellow waste receptacles found in hospitals and other secure areas. They are going to leave them on the street. People who want to do their part for the environment or people who pick up litter and empty garbage cans will get pricked. This could be tragic for families. Was the needle infected? Could it make me sick or kill me? I do not wish that on anyone.

I am asking the Conservative government to think about the families that could be affected by dirty needles.

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for his excellent remarks and for his excellent work as the NDP's deputy health critic. He knows his stuff.

His arguments as to why Canada should have supervised injection sites are based on facts. I find it unfortunate that the Conservatives' arguments are based on their ideology and prejudices. What is more, they are unable to provide any scientific evidence or point to any scientific studies that show that supervised injection sites are harmful and detrimental to public safety.

I would like my colleague to elaborate on the importance of supervised injection sites. Their importance has been scientifically proven, through various studies. I would like to hear what he has to say about those studies.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord has 45 seconds to respond.

**Mr. Dany Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my NDP colleague for her good question. It gives me an opportunity to talk about statistics and the research that has been done on this topic.

A 2008 study conducted by Boyd et al. concluded that 80% of the people questioned who live or work in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside support InSite. A scientific survey was conducted and, according to the study, 80% of people agree with the site. That leaves 20% who do not agree, but the majority of people support this type of site.

In addition, since the site opened, Vancouver has seen a 35% decrease in overdose deaths. The Conservatives should stop and think about that statistic. Do they want overdose deaths to increase by 35%? That is what will happen if the government moves ahead with Bill C-2.

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to Bill C-2. Members will know how unusual it is for a member in my position in this House to actually get a chance to speak at second reading to any of the legislation. This is a particularly important piece of legislation, and I am pleased to stand here and urge that, when this piece of legislation goes to committee, the Conservative members

should actually take on board significant changes, in a departure from current practice. In fact, the most important and significant change that could be made would be to withdraw this piece of legislation altogether.

Let me go back and review some of the history of how it is that we find this piece of legislation before us, as was described by my friend earlier, the member for Burnaby—Douglas. Vancouver is the site of North America's only safe injection drug site. It is absolutely a sign of progressive, science-based decision-making within the municipality of Vancouver and also within the province of British Columbia.

The InSite safe injection site in Vancouver, just to put it bluntly, bottom line, saves lives. That is what matters. The InSite safe injection drug site in Vancouver does not promote drug use; it does not increase the number of people in the criminal element, but it seeks to save the lives of those who are so unfortunate that they have become users of illegal drugs.

To cover some of the history, we know this whole area of public policy is known as "harm reduction", and a safe injection drug site is designed to assist people get to care, get to help and avoid overdoses. The studies that have been done make it clear on any empirical analysis that this is cost effective, saves lives and is in the interest of public health. It has been found to work as a system. Safe injection drug sites have been found in studies by international agencies—the United Nations drug and illegal substances organization, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Health Organization and others—to have the kind of approach in harm reduction that works and saves lives. The specific data from the InSite site in Vancouver confirm all this.

Why do I bother to mention all of that? It is because the current bill before us, Bill C-2, really goes back to a failed effort by a previous minister of health in 2008 to shut down the InSite centre by refusing to extend its licence. As one can imagine, a centre that allows the safe injection of otherwise illegal substances does require an exemption to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Back in 2008, the then-minister of health, currently the President of the Treasury Board, decided not to extend its licence. This was a decision taken in the absence of facts. It was taken in essentially a fact-free zone in which, unfortunately, too much of the legislation from the current administration resides. In this fact-free zone, it did not matter that InSite was saving lives; it mattered only that it involved illicit drugs and that there might be some scope here on an ideological basis, going along with an agenda that is generally described as "tough on crime". In this case, it would be tough on people who have been unfortunate enough to become drug addicts.

Going back to the 2008 decision, that gave rise to several court cases that ultimately were resolved in the Supreme Court of Canada in a case of Canada (A.G.) v. PHS Community Services Society. The decision of the Supreme Court of Canada was handed down on September 30, 2011. What the court said was that the services of this InSite drug facility, for which the minister of health had refused to provide an extended exemption under the act to allow the site to continue to operate, were found by the Supreme Court to reduce health risks.

Further, the court said:

*Government Orders*

On future applications, the Minister must exercise that discretion—

This is the discretion the minister has to allow exemptions under the act. Then it continues:

—within the constraints imposed by the law and the Charter, aiming to strike the appropriate balance between achieving public health and public safety. In accordance with the Charter, the Minister must consider whether denying an exemption would cause deprivations of life and security of the person that are not in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

• (1135)

Those are very strong words from the Supreme Court of Canada. First, it said this harm reduction safe drug injection site in Vancouver was in the public interest and was necessary because it reduced health risks. In other words, the Supreme Court found on all the evidence that this safe injection drug site saved lives. It further found that, if the minister is looking at exemptions in future cases, the minister must turn his or her mind to the question of whether denying such an exemption would cause deprivations of life and security of the person and that there must be an appropriate balance between public health and public safety.

If there were a good-faith effort in Bill C-2 to find an appropriate balance between public health and public safety, then this piece of legislation would not have emerged. There is no attempt at balance here. Bill C-2 is, pure and simple, an attempt by the current ideologically driven administration to do indirectly that which the Supreme Court will not let it do directly. This is a convoluted attempt to make it impossible, or virtually impossible, for future ministers to approve any more exemptions to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to allow for safe injection drug sites.

Let me share with the House why I say that this is not a good-faith effort to find balance. This is a disguised attempt to shut down safe injection drug sites. In other words, it is an attempt, through the legislative process of this place, to let people die when we know how to save people's lives. That I find unconscionable.

If we look at subclause 56.1(3) of the act, which requires the minister to examine any application for an exemption—in other words, a permit to allow such a site to exist—it starts with a review for 26 different criteria. More than two dozen different criteria must be provided to the minister. Ironically—and I think we will all find this ironic—the first is scientific evidence. It is only by ignoring the scientific evidence that this particular administration wants to shut down such sites.

Scientific evidence must be provided, as well as letters from all and sundry, such as the police chief and local government. There must be surveys to consider what kind of local litter problems there are in the community. They must have statistics pulled together, which is again ironic from an administration that has shut down access to many statistics. It is a long and convoluted process.

I found the most stunning requirement was not the financing plan of how this would be self-sustaining, but at the early stage when anyone is applying to run such a site, the applicant must provide the name, title, resumé, relevant education and training of the proposed responsible person. In other words, before someone can even get permission to run such an operation, that person has to have staff ready and on site, and all of their qualifications must be put forward to the minister. Not only that, but the applicant has to have run

extensive checks on the possibility that in any previous jurisdiction in which the employees have ever lived, they may have run afoul of the law.

On top of all the specific conditions and requirements for an applicant, there is the general (z) provision, which is “any other information that the minister considers relevant for the consideration of the application”. In other words, on top of these multiple onerous requirements before an application can even go to the minister, the minister can make up anything else that he or she feels like asking the applicant to provide.

If that was it, we could say it is important in any community to ascertain that the people who are running safe injection drug sites know what they are doing, that they are competent, that they have considered all the evidence and that it would be welcomed in the community. That is not necessarily unreasonable, but there is no balance. All the factors go against saying yes.

However, then we come to subclause 56.1(5), which is really putting the kibosh on any new site because the minister may only grant an exemption for a medical purpose if the applicant has taken into account certain principles.

Paragraphs 56.1(5)(a) to 56.1(5)(f) list principles that all go toward a thought process that leads to no. They must take into account that illicit substances may have serious health effects, that there are health risks, that there is a risk of increasing organized crime and that organized crime profits are part of the drug trade. There is no mention once that the minister should take under his or her consideration the fact that safe injection drug sites save lives. It is not even in the list of possible considerations for a minister. Therefore, after all the considerations are received and after all the hurdles to opening such a site, the list of principles under this act lead any minister to be forced toward saying no.

• (1140)

In other words, this bill is not about balance. This bill is a disguised prohibition on doing what the Supreme Court of Canada said we must do.

• (1145)

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague on saying exactly what is in this bill.

From my days as a municipal councillor, I know very well what to do to ensure that nothing happens in a community. There have been enough conditions and requirements to make it impossible.

It is a disguised attempt in saying, yes, these sites are welcome and we recognize a problem, when clearly that is not the direction. At the end of the day, the government wants to make sure there are no other sites like this.

*Government Orders*

These sites are clearly what is needed when we look at the studies on harm reduction and what is needed in our country. Our whole war on drugs of which I have been very supportive is not working, regrettably, in the way that we have been addressing it, in the U.S., in Europe and in Canada. We need to look at doing things differently.

Harm reduction has started with this clinic. I visited this clinic many years ago when it first opened. I was uncomfortable with the whole idea, but I went and visited. I talked to people in the Vancouver area. I really became convinced that, whether I wanted it or not, we have to accept that there is a problem, we have to try to fix it for those who need our help and we have to look at harm reduction for those particular people.

This clinic is one of the things we need to have in particular areas of the country. I would like to ask the member if there are other opportunities across Canada where she thinks these kinds of facilities should be located.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, clearly the term she used is part and parcel of this, the “war on drugs”.

There has been a war on drugs in North America for decades now. If we are taking a body count, we are losing. Organized crime is winning. That is not what any of us wants.

I have some exposure to those people who have been so unfortunate as to become addicted to illegal drugs, and only by the grace of God has it not been close to my family. However, friends of my kids and my grandkids are at an age where they could be exposed to these drugs.

Nobody in this place wants more people to be exposed to illicit drugs. Nobody wants to see the profits of organized crime go up. However, if we look at the track record of the so-called war on drugs, we will see that it is failing.

Let us try harm reduction. Let us save the lives of people who can come to a safe place and then have access to the kinds of assistance, therapy, supports and counselling that get them off drugs for good. Let us not pretend we are doing something while we turn a blind eye to their suffering.

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hard-working member across the way for her interventions.

I do have a question for her. The purpose of this bill is to highlight the importance of consultation. In fact that is what the Supreme Court has said, that we have to have proper consultation. That is what the bill is asking for. Those are the changes, that we have adequate consultation before we have a new supervised injection site in Canada.

We have one in Vancouver, but if there were to be others, they would require consultation. Would the member oppose having consultation? If she does, what does she suggest replaces consultation?

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think any of us would be against consultation.

These are sensitive issues, and I think we need more dialogue, not the kind of tactics that divide. I saw in one of the press stories that there was a fundraising appeal from the Conservative Party saying

that the opposition members want to bring illicit drugs into communities so that people would be shooting up in neighbourhoods. That is unhelpful. I would not attribute those kinds of comments to my friend across the way at all.

What we need to have is that kind of conversation in which everybody is brought into the picture. For instance, in downtown Victoria we have problems with illicit drug use. We have people who are addicted and who get help through a fantastic facility in Victoria, Our Place. It is not a safe injection drug site, but it provides services, help and respect to people who are living on the streets.

Anything that provides a point of contact, respect and help to people who need help is of value. I think that can be discussed in a kind of enlightened fact-based respectful communication. Certainly some people may object within a community, but we should have consultation.

What is wrong with this bill is not that it involves consultation; it is that it creates a structure that makes it almost impossible under the way the law is written, given the principles the minister must consider, for a minister to say yes when a minister should.

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House to join with my colleagues in opposing Bill C-2.

To be quite honest, I am extremely disappointed that the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Vancouver East was rejected. It is very unfortunate. She put forward an amendment that was sensible, reasoned and based on scientifically proven facts. Unfortunately, Conservative ideology has once again prevailed over science and reason. We are debating yet another seriously flawed bill that reflects the Conservatives' outdated thinking and prejudices. Falsely touted as legislation that will protect Canadian families, Bill C-2 is designed to violate the Supreme Court's 2011 decision regarding safe injection sites.

I think it is important to note that at the time, the Supreme Court ruled that the minister's decision to close InSite, in Vancouver, violated the rights—as guaranteed in the charter—of InSite's clients and that the minister's decision was arbitrary and undermined the very purposes of the act, which include public health and safety. The Supreme Court also ruled that the minister's violation was very serious. It endangered the health and lives of the clients as well as people in similar situations. The Supreme Court also stated that InSite and other supervised injection sites should be granted an exemption as provided for under section 56 of the act when a supervised injection site will decrease the risk of death and disease, and there is little or no evidence that it will have a negative impact on public safety.

*Government Orders*

Naturally, this decision contradicted the Conservatives' obvious desire to get rid of anything that could even remotely resemble a supervised injection site. Bill C-2 is another attempt to satisfy this desire, even though many scientific studies have proven that supervised injection sites like InSite are beneficial. Studies have also proven that these sites do not represent any risk to public safety and that they actually tend to enhance public safety in our neighbourhoods.

Scientific evidence has shown that supervised injection sites can effectively reduce the risk of contracting and spreading blood-borne diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C, and also help decrease overdose-related deaths.

Supervised injection sites are consistent with a harm reduction approach, an approach that Canada took until 2007, when the Conservatives decided to impose their abstinence ideals at the expense of the public, even if it risked the lives of people struggling with addictions.

I think it is rather ironic that we are debating Bill C-2 to get rid of supervised injection sites so close to December 1, World AIDS Day. Yesterday, the Canadian AIDS Society was handing out red ribbons, like the one I am wearing proudly today. My Conservative colleagues went to pick up ribbons and wore them proudly, but today they are here in the House continuing to push their partisan agenda. They are still doing everything they can to get rid of supervised injection sites. They are directly undermining the work done by health care professionals to eradicate epidemics of blood-borne diseases like AIDS.

While talking yesterday with representatives from the Canadian AIDS Society, I learned that some parts of Canada are currently facing an actual AIDS epidemic. For example, in Saskatchewan, the HIV infection rate is almost three times higher than the national average. These figures are disturbing. One factor that contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS in certain parts of Saskatchewan is unfortunately injection drug use.

• (1155)

Having sites like InSite would be a very effective way to reduce the incidence of this disease, in addition to reducing overdose deaths, as I mentioned earlier.

However, rather than directly supporting the efforts being made to eradicate this epidemic, the Conservatives are trying to prevent the opening of new sites and depriving vulnerable Canadians of the services and support they actually need. Rather than helping these vulnerable people, the Conservatives are using them to raise funds from their voter base. Honestly, this is one of the most disgusting things I have seen this government do, while hiding the truth from its base.

The Conservatives tell their voter base that this bill will help keep heroin out of their backyards. This is totally false. In fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. If people no longer have a place where they can go, receive medical care and get the help they need, in addition to having a safe place, inside, to use the drugs they are unfortunately addicted to, where will these people go? They will go into the streets and the parks and near schools.

In recent weeks, we have heard a number of Conservative members say they care about Canadian families and they want to protect mothers, children, widows and orphans. Really, they are simply fearmongering in order to fill their coffers in preparation for the next election and using vulnerable people in our society to do so. Those people really need our help; they certainly do not need the contempt this government is showing them every day.

Frankly, I cannot believe the Conservatives are waging such a fundraising campaign in our society. It is beyond comprehension and furthermore, based on a campaign of fear and prejudice, with no basis in fact. The Conservatives are trying to address some legitimate concerns of the people they represent.

Quite honestly, each and every one of us has people in our riding who are worried about supervised injection sites. These are legitimate concerns that must be addressed. We must not react by fearmongering or encouraging prejudice and scorn towards people with substance abuse problems. Instead, we should be using our resources to try to solve the problem. We need to ensure that people can get the support they need, as well as easy access to resources to help them treat their addiction.

That is exactly what is happening at InSite. People have direct access to health care professionals who are there to help them in case of any problems or to simply provide advice. They have access to social workers and can be referred to detox centres.

Research has shown that in addition to reducing overdose deaths in Vancouver by 35%, which is significant, people who use InSite's services are almost twice as likely to enrol in a detox program. They are also more likely to have access to the resources that will help them turn their lives around and overcome their addiction. However, we have to go to them. To simply say that services exist, without making them easily accessible to the people who need them most, does not guarantee access and will not have the desired effect on public safety.

I do not have any children yet, but I can picture myself taking my children to a park one day and watching them discover discarded needles that might expose them to communicable diseases. I do not want that to happen. No one does.

However, that is what we might see happening in our streets as a result of the Conservatives' decision. People will no longer have a safe place to go to. They will have to go back to what used to be standard practice in neighbourhoods across the country, when people would shoot up here and there in the street, in the lobbies of commercial and residential buildings, near schools and in parks. Unfortunately, that is what we can anticipate if Bill C-2 passes as is. I hope it does not.

I am totally against passing such a bill. I hope that the Conservative Party members will listen to reason and understand the message from social organizations, health professionals and people who work with addicts daily and know their reality.

*Government Orders*

• (1200)

These people and these organizations dispense with prejudice and false, backward ideology, and focus instead on research and proven clinical trials. That is what we should be basing our decisions as parliamentarians on. The government should rely less on ideology and more on facts. For that reason, I hope that Bill C-2 will be defeated.

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech on this matter.

I would like to address clause 5 of this bill and review the six criteria that the government wants to impose for new or existing sites such as InSite.

Paragraph c) states:

[*English*]

The risks of overdose are inherent to the use of certain illicit substances

[*Translation*]

It is very clear. However, studies by InSite show that overdoses have decreased by 30% in the Vancouver neighbourhood where InSite is located.

Does my colleague have anything to say about that and about the important contribution that new sites could make to a community's safety?

**Ms. Éloise Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question.

In fact, as I mentioned earlier, InSite has managed to reduce overdose mortality in Vancouver by 35%. That is very significant. It shows the positive impact that a supervised injection site such as InSite can have.

Earlier, my colleague opposite, the member for Langley, seemed to insinuate that people opposed to this bill also oppose public consultation. If we read between the lines of the bill, we see that the Conservatives are trying to establish a structure to prevent the opening of other sites. I just cannot understand that.

Unfortunately, I do not have the time to read all the criteria that the Conservatives have put in their bill in an attempt to tie the hands of people who would like to open new sites like InSite, which help people dealing with addiction.

However, the statistics that my colleague and I have provided show the direct positive effects of centres such as InSite. I find it unfortunate that, even today, we are debating reducing access to services for those with drug problems.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the member listened to some of my comments, but I am not pleased that she has prejudged motives. I do not think she is elevated to the position where she can determine the motives of members of Parliament.

The motives are to represent Canadians. In the House, each of us has the responsibility to represent our constituents. Part of that representation comes through consultation. We consult with our

colleagues, we consult with one another, and we consult with our constituents.

Why would the member be opposed to a consultation that the Supreme Court has suggested that we have, and not prejudge whether a supervised injection site can be put at a specific location? It suggested that we consult before any decisions are made.

Why would she be so opposed to consultation or prejudge the motives of others?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éloise Michaud:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the Conservatives have finally decided to join today's debate in the House. Unfortunately, I also feel as though my remarks and intentions have been misjudged.

In the comment I just made, I clearly mentioned that I am completely open to consultation. What the hon. member for Langley has failed to mention is the huge list of conditions that organizations seeking to open new supervised injection sites will have to meet.

The member also failed to mention that, even if the applications submitted by organizations meet all the criteria, the minister can still refuse to allow these sites to open. Clearly, the criteria for opening new sites are excessively restrictive.

My colleague also seems to forget that some of his constituents may be struggling with drug addictions and may need the help provided by facilities such as InSite. We must not think only about the most fortunate people in our ridings. We also have to think about the most vulnerable. However, this government forgets and neglects these people, which I find extremely unfortunate.

We all have vulnerable people in our ridings who need our help and who gave us the mandate to represent them and stand up for their interests. However, unfortunately, these are the people who are being neglected in the Conservative ridings.

• (1205)

[*English*]

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see that all my friends are here to listen to my speech in great numbers.

I would like to start by saying that in analyzing the notes and looking at what is going on, I find this to be a disturbing situation. In one part of the country, we have a program that works, but then we have the government with its bill trying to make it more difficult to continue this program and more difficult for others to implement it. It seems that the tendency of the Conservative government is to ignore evidence as it constructs policy, which I would say is often based on ideology rather than the facts.

*Government Orders*

As a prelude to my speech on Bill C-2, I just had a chance to skim through the annual report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator for 2011-12. One of things highlighted is the increase in prison population even though our crime rate is decreasing. If members look at that report and the various crime bills and legislation, I would say that one could comfortably say that it is based not so much on the idea of trying to rehabilitate people to become productive members of society when they get out, but on punishment, almost vicious punishment. I think back in history to the age of enlightenment and the Dark Ages when western civilization was invaded by barbarians. I hope we are not going in that direction.

Some of the concerns in the correctional report is in regard to double-bunking, for example, which puts a strain on the system. In a sense, it is a punishment, but the effects, which I will talk about later, are far-reaching. The report says:

The increasing costs of corrections in Canada and rising inmate numbers are inseparable from a number of significant legislative measures. Since 2006, these reforms have resulted in:

Expansion of a range of mandatory minimum penalties for certain offences, particularly for serious drug offences, gun crimes and child exploitation offences

Abolition or tightening of parole review criteria

Reduction of credit for time served in pre-trial custody

Restricted use of conditional sentences.

Although we may agree with a number of these criteria, the fact remains that we have put more people into our prisons at a time when the crime rate was decreasing, and we have made it more difficult for these people to get rehabilitated and become productive members of society when they come out.

Prison crowding, for example, has negative impacts on the system's ability to provide humane, safe and secure custody. The report says, "Putting two inmates in a single cell means an inevitable loss of privacy and dignity, and increases the potential for tension and violence."

The report talks about how this tension and violence is detrimental to the final rehabilitation of prisoners so they can come out into society.

As prisons become more crowded, the physical conditions of confinement are hardening. At the higher security levels, inmates already have extremely limited opportunities for association, movement and assembly.

Programming and vocational opportunities in maximum security prisons are extremely limited, defined by operational and security concerns driven largely by the influence of gangs, drugs and incompatibles.

I would like to transpose this to our current discussion on Bill C-2.

Overall, one would think that if we have a program that has been successful, has taken drugs off the street and was able to work in rehabilitating addicts, the tendency would be not only to keep it but to expand it around the country.

●(1210)

[Translation]

Unfortunately, what we have here is a thinly veiled attempt to shut down supervised injection sites, which runs directly counter to the Supreme Court's decision. With these criteria, it will be much more difficult for organizations to open supervised injection sites in Canada.

The NDP feels that decisions respecting programs that may improve public health must be based on facts, not on ideological positions.

In 2011, for example, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that InSite provided essential services and that it could stay open under the exemption provided for by section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. The court held that the charter permitted users to access InSite's services and that similar services should also be allowed to operate under an exemption.

What is surprising is that more than 30 peer-reviewed studies published in journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* have described the benefits of InSite. That is more than 30 studies. In addition, studies on more than 70 similar supervised injection sites in Europe and Australia have reported similar outcomes. InSite in Vancouver is one of the biggest public health breakthroughs in Canada. We believe that this site and others delivering similar benefits should be able to offer their services under appropriate supervision.

It is strange. We have a program that works well. Articles and studies published in Canada and in scientific journals show that it works well and that it is helping people. However, here we have to debate a bill that will prevent that program from continuing. It makes no sense.

This is a very imperfect bill, based, as I have previously said, on an anti-drug ideology and on baseless fears about public safety.

The Conservatives say they are going to try to get drugs off the streets, but what is interesting is that this bill will make it virtually impossible to open safe injection sites. That answers my colleague from Langley's question. It will be virtually impossible to open safe injection sites, which will have the effect of promoting heroin's return to neighbourhoods. How ironic. This bill will promote heroin's return to neighbourhoods.

We believe that any new legislation on supervised injection sites should abide by the spirit of the Supreme Court's decision, which this bill does not do. We also believe that harm reduction programs, including supervised injection sites, must be subject to exemptions based on evidence of their ability to improve a community's health and preserve human life, not on ideological positions.

In conclusion, I am very disappointed that we are debating this bill, which will make life more difficult for people who are trying to combat this disease of heroin abuse.

●(1215)

[English]

When the bill goes to committee, which I imagine it will, there will be evidence and debate. I hope the governing party will take into account the effects and the scientific evidence when it looks at amendments to the bill, so that we can make this work for all Canadians.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech.

My background is in technology, and as we always say, “If it ain't broke, don't fix it.”

In other words, if something works, there is no need to fiddle with it.

InSite works, gets results and provides a front-line service that leads to rehabilitation and the reduction of collateral damage, such as dirty needles in parks.

It is too bad that the government does not seem concerned about the effects of the law itself. I think we need to study this bill in terms of the public interest. What would be best for our society?

How does my colleague think we should study this bill in terms of the public interest?

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, and I will comment on what he said at the beginning of his statement.

[English]

Personally, I think the government is saying, “If it works, we will fix it according to our ideological criteria.”

[Translation]

We have noticed this attitude in the areas of the environment, science and foreign affairs. In fact, we have seen it in everything that was working in my country. In my country, everything that works is being systematically changed. That is unacceptable. A program that works and can benefit Canadians can no longer work because of the Conservatives' false ideology.

This is not my country. This is not the Canada I know.

[English]

**Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member for Louis-Hébert mentioned, “If it ain't broke, don't fix it.”

Hopefully, the member who just gave a speech recognizes that the Supreme Court indicated that if we were to open any injection sites, community consultations were actually a requirement. Therefore, that is something that needs to be done. The Supreme Court has given us clear direction that we have to have community consultations.

Would the member please clarify whether he is against community consultations for future safe injection sites before they are implemented?

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** Mr. Speaker, the thing is that the bill would set criteria for the opening of new sites and would make them so stringent that, as department officials have indicated to us, if an applicant should accidentally forget to include something, the request would automatically be denied. Therefore, are these consultations another kind of sham or a pretext to ram through this legislation?

I would think that if they are done properly, if it makes it easier for communities and cities to have similar programs, if it makes it possible for InSite to continue, then I would welcome them. However, I would submit that is not the case. That is not what the government is proposing.

● (1220)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would argue that the injection site in Vancouver is a huge success story, right from its origin. It is a good example of co-operative federalism when we have the federal government, at the time, working with the provincial government and then working with the stakeholders to recognize a problem that is in the community and generate some ideas, a specific solution to the problem. They come together and they make it happen. It addresses the issue right up front.

Then, in the years that follow, there are success stories. They are real. They are tangible. Lives have been saved. Our community is safer, and so forth. These are all facts.

Yet, the government seems to be of the opinion that we should push all of that to the side because they just do not believe in injection sites, and we have heard that from members of the Conservative Party.

I wonder if the member would like to comment on that?

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with that? What is wrong when we have one level of government co-operating with other levels of government? That is our country. The federal government co-operates with the provinces, which co-operate with the cities, and we get something that works. InSite is an example of that.

What we have here is a government that goes against other levels of government. Instead of co-operating, it goes against them. It does not co-operate. It introduces policies that are contrary to what most Canadians believe. I find that a shame.

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the last portion of the debate, my colleague said that if it working, they fix it again. I have a different take on that.

I remember, in the government of Mike Harris, an education minister, John Snobelen. He actually had the gall to say, in regard to education, that we have to create a crisis so we can come in and fix it. We have to break what is working so that we can go in and fix it.

When I look at the front bench across the way, it reminds me that the Minister of Finance, the President of the Treasury Board, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were all principal players in that government and are bringing that kind of approach to the federal level.

I am rising today to oppose Bill C-2. What Conservatives are trying to do with the bill is clear. I have to give them credit for the level of political camouflaging contained within the bill.

It is clear that the measures in the bill would hurt some of the most vulnerable in our society and would be very costly to our health care system.

*Government Orders*

There is another very troubling and repeating pattern with the government. Why do we even have a Supreme Court ruling in this case? It is because the government challenged the right of InSite and safe injection sites to exist. The Conservatives do not believe in them. They do not want them. They want to make it as onerous as possible, which is the purpose of this legislation.

The member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore stood and asked if we are against community consultation. It is ridiculous to try to camouflage the deep flaws in the bill with statements like that. Of course we are in favour of consulting Canadians and communities about what goes on in their neighbourhoods. That is exactly how governments should work. However, the government, time and time again, ignores that basic principle when we are talking about resource development, environmental protection, and the safety of Canadians. It is like asking if we are against oxygen. No one is against oxygen. We would not be here without it.

The bill pretends to address public health and safety concerns about safe injection sites. In fact, it has three other completely different goals. Very simply, the bill aims to shut down InSite, the supervised injection site in east Vancouver, and to prevent any other supervised sites from operating. I believe that it aims to nullify and circumvent the 2011 Supreme Court of Canada ruling in favour of safe injection sites, and I believe that it constitutes a further attack on the principle of harm reduction.

Harm reduction is critical to dealing with issues of substance abuse. We have to reduce the harm so that people can be in a position to gain quality of life and have the strength to overcome the tremendous challenges that come with addiction.

In Toronto, we have one of the country's foremost centres for dealing with addiction and mental health. It is called CAMH, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. I would like to read its submission to the Toronto Board of Health in July in regard to supervised injection sites. It said:

Supervised Injection Services are another public health approach that can reduce harms associated with injection drug use. Research from around the globe has shown that these services are associated with several benefits to injection drug users including reducing behaviours associated with HIV and Hepatitis C infections, lowering risky injection practices, reducing overdoses, and increasing referrals to treatment and other health services.

I will stop there for a moment and repeat that last part: “and increasing referrals to treatment and other health services”.

I will bring up a business analogy, and of course, the folks across the way love those. Anyone who has run a business knows how much harder it is to get a new client in the door than it is to keep an existing one. Part of the purpose of safe injection sites is to get people in the door so that they can be given access to the other services that are going to make them healthy and productive members of our society, at lower cost. That is what is really funny about the bill. It is going to cost Canadians millions of dollars in future court challenges, in future health care costs, and in the destruction of communities, because these services will not exist.

•(1225)

The submission by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health to the Toronto Board of Health in July 2013 continues:

In addition, Supervised Injection Services do not increase crime and disorder in the surrounding neighbourhood and actually reduce other problems like public drug abuse and discarded injection equipment.

That is pretty clear and simple. It is very basic. It does not increase crime or disorder in the surrounding neighbourhoods and actually reduces problems such as public drug use and discarded injection equipment. It helps to actually keep our communities safer, the communities that have these kinds of problems.

With respect to discarded injection equipment, when I was a child of nine or ten, my father was a teacher in Scarborough at Samuel Hearn public school. Every year around environment day, they would engage in community public cleanups. They would go out into the neighbourhood and do a fabulous public service and help keep their neighbourhoods clean.

They were in an alleyway, about a block away from the school, behind Danforth Avenue near Pharmacy, cleaning up trash. My father was wearing work gloves, but they did not have the thickness that would be required to stop a needle from piercing. He picked up a pile of garbage and was pricked by a discarded syringe from a drug user.

As a nine or ten year old, it is very hard to fathom and understand what follows from that. What followed was that my father had to be tested for HIV, for hepatitis, and for other infectious diseases. That created months of concern and anguish in our family, not knowing whether he had picked up a transmissible or communicable disease and whether he would be facing horrific health challenges in the future.

We were very fortunate that in the end, all the results were negative, but the cost to the health care system, the cost to our family in having to deal with it, and all the uncertainty that followed was a direct result of the fact that there were discarded needles on the ground. Will safe injection sites eliminate this problem completely? Of course not. There is no silver bullet. However, they will be a big part of reducing the harms in our communities.

I also remember, not so long ago, when a Starbucks in Toronto, at John and Queen, installed a safe disposal box for needles in their bathroom. There was an absolute uproar from Conservatives. “You're encouraging drug use. People will now go to that Starbucks to shoot up”. No. What was happening was that people were already going to Starbucks and shooting up and throwing needles in the garbage can. The staff, at the end of the day, would have to pick up that garbage and put their lives at risk because of stupid, inconsiderate policies brought forward by people on the other side. This trend continues to this day. Never let an argument get in front of ideology. Absolutely not.

The submission by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health continues:



*Government Orders*

Given the difference in geography and culture of drug use amongst cities, experiences from these Supervised Injection Services are not simply transferrable to other cities such as Toronto. However, there is evidence to suggest that a Supervised Injection Service could be beneficial to Toronto, though further research involving the development of a pilot Supervised Injection Service would be needed to confirm. With that in mind, CAMH supports the development of a pilot Supervised Injection Service in Toronto. As a teaching hospital dedicated to care, research and education in mental health and addiction, CAMH would be happy to work with other partners to play a role in the evaluation of the pilot service and offer treatment to those in need.

Treatment is what is important and critical here. It is the treatment people would receive going to these safe injection sites, the kind of treatment that would help get them off the streets and help reduce the harm to them, their families, and the community. It would reduce the amount of drug addiction that exists in our communities, and it would help more people have a better quality of life and fulfillment and be active and participating members of our communities.

● (1230)

**Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for Scarborough Southwest. He talked about a couple of things. First was how it would be helpful for the drug addicts on the streets, once they got them inside the door, to get treatment and advice on how to live better and healthier lives. Just near the end of his speech, he talked about how we have to have another new pilot project and work on getting people off the streets and off drugs.

Getting people off drugs and living healthier lives are good things, of course, but we already have injection sites. If the member is going to make claims about how helpful they are, I would love to see some statistics to back it up that show clearly the results of any help that was given. How many people were treated? How many people actually got off drugs? How many people repeated and have never gotten off drugs? It is great to talk a good story, but there have to be facts to back it up.

**Mr. Dan Harris:** Mr. Speaker, the facts have been relayed time and time again today by the other members stating the facts about the InSite service in Vancouver and why it is so helpful to the community. The fact is, 80% of the community supports the site. Overdose deaths are down 35%. Perhaps if the member paid attention to more than one speech, he would have heard all those wonderful facts being relayed.

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a few questions of our hon. member. I want to congratulate him first on his comments and on his understanding of how serious this issue is.

I have been in politics for 25 years now. One of the first things I did in elected office, some 25 years ago this month, was initiate a “dollars against drug abuse” fund. We raised all kinds of money to help in our war on drugs and our fight. Here we are still, and we have made very little progress.

When harm reduction was first mentioned to me some 20 years ago, I said that the idea would be terrible. I sounded just like the folks on the other side of the House. I did not understand it. I said that was not where we wanted to go. We did not want to do harm reduction; we wanted to do elimination altogether. Well, here we are 20 years after that.

I visited that site. I am very supportive of it. I visited with as much trepidation as our members there. I think if the members of the government actually went out and visited the site and spent a few hours there, they would realize that it is really about harm reduction. It is not just for everyone to go there. It is about helping people who need help.

I would like to hear some comments from the hon. member on that issue.

● (1235)

**Mr. Dan Harris:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her comments. Certainly it takes courage to get up in the House and say that at one point she was wrong. I want to congratulate the member for maintaining an open mind and for being open to the possibility that other and new ideas could be useful, despite the initial trepidation.

I have been here as a member for over two years, and not once have I seen the government show an open mind or talk to the possibility that another idea could be good. We see it time and time again. That is why I am very concerned that when this does go back to committee, the Conservative members of the committee are going to slam and stop absolutely every single good and reasoned amendment the opposition is going to bring forward.

I thank the member again for her comments. We are all wrong from time to time, and it is wonderful to show that we have had a change of opinion and that we are on board with something that really is helpful to communities and to individuals.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-2.

The subject of drugs is not always easy to address because it is still taboo. We put people who have used drugs in prison. We get rid of them. However, how long have drugs been around?

I do not know how our great-grandparents managed to deal with it all at the time when distilled alcohol was illegal. Some tough speeches must have been made in Parliament before it was legalized.

Today we are talking about drugs. We are not talking about legalizing heroin, but about a site that was established in Vancouver East and that distributes needles to people with drug problems.

The government has introduced a bill providing for restrictions so tough it will be difficult for that site to renew its licence and for other sites to open in Canada. This bill is a thinly veiled way of preventing supervised injection sites from carrying on their activities, which defies the Supreme Court's decision.

It establishes a long list of restrictive criteria that supervised injection sites will have to meet for the minister to grant them an exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Those criteria will make it much more difficult for organizations to open a supervised injection site. That is the thrust of the bill.

The bill even comes in the wake of the Supreme Court's ruling. We could consult that decision. It mentions, for example, that no one may prevent anything that may save lives.

*Government Orders*

In 2003, InSite was granted an exemption under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. That exemption was issued for medical and scientific reasons so that InSite could offer its services and the effectiveness of supervised injection sites could be assessed.

Section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act gives the minister the power to authorize the use of drugs for medical or scientific purposes or if it is in the public interest.

In 2007, InSite opened the OnSite detox centre. The number of overdose-related deaths in Vancouver has fallen by 35% since that centre opened. The crime rate and the prevalence of communicable diseases and relapses have declined as well.

Earlier the member for Cariboo—Prince George asked where the statistics were. However, I would ask the same question: where are the statistics that warrant changing the act? I would like the government to show us the statistics that explain why they want to amend the act.

For example, the government could tell us that the number of deaths has risen by 35% since needles have been distributed. It is time we thought about this. Has the crime rate risen by 35%? That is a statistic. Before amending the act, the government needs to prove the opposite of what doctors and authorities are saying. However, the Conservatives' ideology is front and centre today.

According to the right-wing Conservative ideology and Conservative supporters, we should put drug users in prison. Above all, we should not give them needles, do prevention work or make contact with people who are helplessly addicted to drugs so that we can direct them to an institution that can help them get off drugs.

If you tell someone that drugs are illegal and not right, that person will still break the law, but he will not talk about it and he will be stuck with his problem.

● (1240)

We will be unable to help these people. The statistics gathered in Vancouver have shown that overdoses have fallen by 35%. In addition, crime has dropped and the number of HIV infections has also declined. Is it not our responsibility to ensure that happens?

[*English*]

The member for Cariboo—Prince George asked where the statistics are and said he would like to see the numbers. I am going to repeat it. We are not supposed to say he was not in the House, but I see him now. I think I was just not looking his way, but he is there and I want him to hear this. When he stood and said he wanted to see the statistics, the statistics are that there was a 35% decrease. Crime went down. HIV went down.

That is why I said that it is the government that should come to us and be able to say it is proposing the bill because it has statistics. The government should give us the statistics to show that crime and HIV went up after people were given needles, but that is not what the statistics are saying.

Doctors and nurses disagree as well. Two days ago, there were nurses in my office saying they were hoping there would be amendments to this bill, as it does not make sense and goes against the health of people.

[*Translation*]

Let me cite an example from Bathurst. Earlier my colleague from Scarborough Southwest talked about people who collect garbage. Bathurst, the community where I live, has a law prohibiting people from putting their garbage bags out at the curb. They have to be put in plastic containers. Workers said that they were being pricked when they picked up garbage bags and that they had caught infections.

One population group has health problems as a result of heroin, but we are prepared to leave them on the street.

I went to Vancouver East and I felt pity for the people living on the street. My colleague from Vancouver East says she supports the idea of distributing needles to people with drug problems.

As an ordinary person, I initially did not understand why we should give needles to people who use drugs. When I went to Vancouver East, however, I realized that it was the right thing to do. My colleague made me understand that when we can receive them in our homes, talk to them and direct them to a medical centre that can help them, we will have done something good.

However, if we abandon them, we will have failed to get the job done and discharge our responsibilities as Canadians and as politicians. The members of this House have a responsibility to pass legislation that helps the men and women of this country. People who live on the street are someone's children. They are citizens. They are human beings. We would not even allow animals to be treated this way.

Today we have before us a government bill that defies a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada solely because of the ideology of the government and its supporters. I forgot that this is the same government that does not believe in the court, in the opposition or in Parliament.

I hope that one day Canadians will make the right decision and get rid of this government once and for all, since it is not working for the welfare of Canadians.

● (1245)

[*English*]

**Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in one statement the member opposite made, he said that this bill “goes against the health of people”. I would like to suggest that nothing goes against the health of people like drugs. If the member thinks that keeping drug addicts happy and giving them a nice, safe, warm place to inject drugs into their arms or wherever is helpful to them and the health of our society, then I think he might want to reconsider.

Getting these people off drugs is what contributes to the health of our society. That is where the focus should be, not having happy addicts walking the streets because they can go to a nice, warm place to get a fix. I am sorry; he and I will always see this differently.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague should talk to the Minister of Finance about how he should stop going on television and crying because Rob Ford bought some drugs, which he said publicly. The minister was saying “My friend, poor him”, with the tears coming down.

*Government Orders*

It is funny how the Conservatives are ready to protect their friends, but when it comes to the ordinary people on the street, they are ready to put them in jail. He should talk to his caucus about the way they are protecting Rob Ford in Toronto. He said publicly that he did buy drugs and he did take drugs. He said he did all of that, but the minister was still sorry, crying on television to support a guy who was on drugs.

The Conservatives are only good to protect their friends, but when it comes to ordinary Canadians, they are not ready to get up for ordinary Canadians and support them.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on a previous speech made by one of the member's colleagues in regard to the issue of how a community can benefit from having a safe injection site.

I am talking about how, whether it is in a community school or back lanes, there are many different spots where drug addicts leave their used needles. It brings a certain element into some of these communities, such as in community schools or clubs, that causes a great deal of concern.

One of the success stories that has come out of the injection site in Vancouver is the fact that the environment in which the site is located is a healthier, safer environment today because of the injection site. I wonder if the member might want to comment on the benefit to the community of having sites of this nature, which even go beyond assistance to individuals.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, that is what it is all about.

It is about dealing with the community, the provincial authority, the people working in health care, the nurses and doctors, and the police. It is about finding the right place to do it, a place away from schools.

That is why I said at the beginning of my speech that when we talk about drugs, it is not the most beautiful thing to talk about. It is taboo.

That is too bad. It is not taboo, because it is on our streets. We have to deal with it. We have to do it the right way, the proper way, and we have to trust the provinces.

The federal government is the type of government that does not speak to the provinces. The Prime Minister is the type who refuses to meet with the premiers of the provinces to discuss the issues that are happening in provinces. This is the Prime Minister who likes to go across the world instead of going across Canada to talk about the problems we have in our own communities. That is the type of government we have.

I hope Canadians turn around and say that this is not our Canada, this is not the vision of our country, and that they will make a change in the next election.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it will be very difficult for me to speak after my colleague's impassioned words. Today's debate has been very emotional because we believe that we can do better for Canadians. I am therefore honoured to comment on Bill C-2.

The government says that it would like to consult communities before opening supervised injection sites. Curiously however, on the very day that it introduced the bill, the Conservative Party posted a petition online entitled "Keep heroin out of our backyards". The petition asks people whether they would like a supervised drug consumption site to be opened in their community. The government is doing everything it can to get in the way of those who would like to open a supervised injection centre.

According to the new rules, anyone wishing to open such a site would first have to ask how the communities in question and the police feel about it, and obtain support from the municipal and provincial authorities. However, they will have to do a lot more than that, in the form of a lot of evidence and documents, including documentation on the financial viability of the site, the need for it in the community and its potential impact on public safety. Furthermore, the Minister of Health would have the last word on applications.

And yet, evidence has shown that supervised injection sites effectively reduce the risk of contracting and spreading communicable diseases through blood, as is the case with HIV and hepatitis C, as well as the risk of dying from an overdose. It has also been demonstrated that they are not a threat to public safety and that in some instances, they promote public safety by reducing the number of people injecting drugs in public, and the violence associated with drug use. Safe injection sites strike a proper balance between health and public safety goals. They also direct people with an urgent need for assistance to the appropriate health services, such as primary care and addiction treatment.

Injection sites are beneficial to communities. However, for a number of ideological reasons—which have been properly demonstrated by my colleague—the government has chosen yet again to put on blinkers and pretend that drug and addiction problems simply do not exist. Rather than attempt to mitigate the harm, they would rather say that everything is fine and dandy. Things are not fine. The work done by these organizations saves lives. A centre like InSite helps to reduce the number of deaths caused by drug overdoses, and directs people who use drugs to the essential social services that can help them.

There is at the moment only one supervised injection site in Canada. Its name is InSite and it is located in Vancouver. Since it was opened, Vancouver has experienced a 35% decrease in overdose fatalities. It has been established that the InSite organization has led to a decrease in crime, communicable disease infections and addiction relapse rates.

The bill goes against the Supreme Court decision. In 2011, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that InSite was providing essential services and should remain open under the exemption provided in section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. The court ruled that the charter authorized users to have access to InSite's services and that similar services should be authorized under an exemption.

*Government Orders*

What message is the government sending if it fails to respect the Supreme Court's decision? The Supreme Court of Canada clearly asked the federal government to stop interfering with the InSite injection site in Vancouver. The highest court in the land is of the opinion that the government's decision to stop exempting centres from criminal prosecution is arbitrary and infringes the rights of addicts to life and safety as provided under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

What more will it take? Why is the government proposing such a bill? It is doing so to impede the work of organizations that help addicts. The Canadian Nurses Association said:

Evidence demonstrates that supervised injection sites and other harm reduction programs bring critical health and social services to vulnerable populations—especially those experiencing poverty, mental illness and homelessness...

● (1250)

A government truly committed to public health and safety would work to enhance access to prevention and treatment services—instead of building more barriers.

The NDP believes that any legislation introduced by the Conservative government must comply with the Supreme Court ruling and strike a balance between public health and public safety.

The Supreme Court ruling also gave various organizations the go-ahead to open supervised injection sites in other areas of the country. That is why this bill should not be passed. Not only is it based on a regressive ideology, but it is also flawed. This bill shows just how out of touch the Conservatives are with reality and just how much they ignore the opinions of experts and scientists.

Supervised injection sites are essential resources for improving the safety of our communities. The Conservative campaign with regard to this bill was called "Keep heroin out of our backyards". Precisely the opposite will happen. Passing this bill will do nothing to address the problem of drug use on the streets. This bill will not stop people from using drugs on the streets. On the contrary, it will now be almost impossible to open safe injection sites, which will bring heroin back into our neighbourhoods.

People will continue to find dirty needles on the ground. Drug users will still not have access to clean, safe equipment, and the rates of HIV and hepatitis will continue to climb. It is obvious that safe injection sites have been proven to work, and the Conservative government needs to face the facts and listen to what health experts have to say.

When researching this bill, I found a statistic that I thought was quite striking: people who used InSite's services at least once a week were 1.7 times more likely to enter a detox program than those who visited infrequently.

This statistic clearly shows that supervised injection sites can help people into detox programs. Facilities such as InSite play a vital role in reducing harm and getting people off drugs.

One argument that I often hear made against programs such as InSite is that people prefer to allocate resources to initiatives that help people overcome their addiction instead of opening additional safe injection sites. That is only natural; I can understand that argument.

However, that statistic clearly indicates that safe injection sites are a step towards getting off drugs. People who use drugs in the street will not wake up one morning and decide to stop using. However, by going to a safe injection site, users have the opportunity to speak with medical professionals, receive advice and learn more about how to access treatment centres.

InSite administrators clearly saw those benefits and opened OnSite in 2007. Users can be sent on OnSite, located directly above InSite, which provides detox and rehab services. There, users who are ready to take control of their addiction can undergo detox treatment under the supervision of social workers, nurses, mental health specialists and doctors. Those specialists can also help users plan their next steps and provide counselling to avoid a relapse.

I touched on the benefits of safe injection sites, and now I would like to speak to Bill C-2 and how it makes it nearly impossible to set up a new safe injection site.

Preparing an application for a new supervised injection site will be such a cumbersome process that it may dissuade applicants from even opening a file. If an applicant mistakenly forgets to include certain documents, the application could be automatically denied. Even if an applicant manages to obtain all of the documents needed for the application and has the community's full support, the minister can still deny it. Some applications may also take forever for no good reason, which means groups could be kept waiting for months or even years.

This bill is a serious obstacle to opening safe injection sites that can really help drug users and improve safety in our communities.

It is clear that safe injection sites have proven their worth.

● (1255)

They are a sound and effective solution to the problem of addiction in Canada.

I am ready to answer questions.

● (1300)

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after listening to my colleague's speech, it seems to me that these sites have very clearly and demonstrably received worldwide recognition. There are sites like these in 70 cities around the world, particularly in Australia.

As a health professional, I am thoroughly familiar with the beneficial aspects of these sites, particularly for a vulnerable drug-addicted population. These sites build bridges and help these people.

There is also an office above InSite that helps these people fight their addiction and that, sooner or later, will direct them to the kind of care that could ultimately eliminate blood-borne diseases like HIV/AIDS.

I am puzzled about something, and have a question for my colleague.

Would this bill not run counter to the Supreme Court's ruling?

*Government Orders*

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I would also like to congratulate her on her work as the deputy health critic. She has done a remarkable job and it is always a pleasure to work with her.

Indeed, it is really important. The facts have shown that the InSite centre is successful because it helps people with a drug problem. Sometimes, it can be a mental health problem. It is clear that the site is working.

It is therefore difficult to understand such a bill, which runs counter to the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling. I can only imagine that the Conservatives decided to introduce this bill for political reasons.

When you can help people, you have to do so. It is not as if the whole community around the InSite centre is demanding that it be closed. The need is real. I think that it should be kept and that we should support the people who run it. It is a good thing.

[*English*]

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting for me to try to wrap my head around the ideas of the Conservatives with the bill.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health says, "Supervised Injection Services are another public health approach that can reduce harms associated with injection drug use".

Since InSite opened, Vancouver has seen a 35% decrease in overdose deaths. We are saving lives. Furthermore, InSite has been shown to decrease crime, communicable diseases, infection rates and relapse rates for drug users.

These individuals are going to InSite and have an opportunity to safely do what they need to and at the same time, find a place where they can get help. There is a nurse there, so if they have finally hit their bottom, they can turn to someone and ask for help.

I do not understand why the Conservatives want to see these places shut down. I would like to hear my hon. colleague's comments relating to this.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** Mr. Speaker, other countries have safe injection sites. Having a safe injection site does not mean there will be more people using drugs. We are not going to have people saying, "There's a place where I can do it, so I am going to start using drugs". It means people will have access to clean needles, doctors and a referral service to get treatment.

All the statistics show that it is working, it is helping people and it is saving lives. There is no reason to have the bill. I just do not understand where the government is going on this. It is saving lives. It is a very important site in Vancouver.

Maybe other communities might decide that they have a problem. Maybe everybody works together. Maybe safe injection sites will be used in other communities. I have worked in Ottawa. I know there are a lot of drugs in the downtown core. Maybe something like that would help people here and save lives.

• (1305)

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak again on Bill C-2. I did speak

previously on the amendment that was proposed to Bill C-2 and gave a broader speech on my opposition to the bill then. Today, I want to focus on HIV/AIDS and Bill C-2.

Today I am wearing an AIDS ribbon as a reminder of World AIDS Day this December 1. I want to restate the AIDS Society's message this year, which is, "If you think the fight against HIV/AIDS has been won... Think again. It's not over".

I think that's a very important message for all of us in the House of Commons, particularly when we are debating a bill such as Bill C-2.

I am from a generation of men who lost many, in fact, most of my closest friends to HIV/AIDS. When this was being ignored as a gay disease, gay men had to organize and fight back against prejudice and ignorance. Society responded, in particular, the medical community responded quite strongly. We have made great progress, but we have not cured AIDS.

Now an HIV/AIDS diagnosis is no longer a death sentence, but it is still a very serious medical condition. It is one which has great costs, and the Conservatives are always worried about costs. In financial terms, it has been estimated at about \$500,000 per new case of HIV/AIDS, but it also takes a great personal toll on our friends and families.

It is still a serious medical condition, but the success we have had has led to some unfortunate consequences.

One of those consequences is the rise of HIV/AIDS rates among young gay men, again. Some of the education we have been doing is obviously failing as a new generation of gay men are coming up and feeling invincible, as all young people do, but also feeling that somehow HIV/AIDS medical progress means it is something they do not have to worry about. We have to recommit ourselves to doing that education in the gay community so that people are aware of the seriousness that HIV/AIDS still represents.

However, another thing has happened, which is that the main population being affected by AIDS has shifted. While AIDS was highly prevalent in most cases in the 1980s and 1990s among gay men, we have had a change and now over half the new cases of HIV/AIDS are among injection drug users.

This is a population, again, for which there is a great deal of prejudice. I was very disturbed by the comments from the member for Prince George—Peace River when he talked about "happy addicts". There is no such thing as a happy addict. It is indicative of the ignorance that some members have about addiction as a serious medical problem. We are talking about how we deal with this medical problem. Injection drug users are now, in most parts of the country, the largest number of HIV/AIDS infections, and this has been true for much of the past decade.

Therefore, both the idea that HIV/AIDS is a manageable medical condition and the moral opprobrium that we heap on injection drug users means that we are now tending to ignore this problem in an important part of our society. We treat HIV drug users as if they have some kind of moral failing, as if somehow they have not understood how they have to act, instead of thinking about the reality of the situation, which is that addiction is a medical problem.

*Government Orders*

What does this have to do directly with Bill C-2?

I want to speak about a policy paper from the Canadian AIDS Society on injection drug use and HIV/AIDS. It refers to what it calls a health crisis caused by an epidemic of injection drug use. I think the use of the term “epidemic” is quite apt. This is a medical condition. This is not a moral condition of our society.

According to the Canadian AIDS Society, starting in 1996, over half of the new HIV/AIDS infections in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver were as a result of injection drug use. Starting as early as 1996, we have seen the shift in the population most seriously affected by HIV/AIDS. Now, the AIDS Society reports, that trend has extended across the entire country to smaller cities and rural areas. The focus of new infections is the injection drug user community.

There are obvious reasons, and one of those is sharing needles and other drug paraphernalia and equipment. However, there is a secondary reason I do not think we like to face up to, which is that many injection drug users engage in unsafe sex while high on drugs, and this is a significant contributor to HIV/AIDS infections. In fact, in our major cities it is not uncommon among young male street youth to trade unprotected sex for injection drugs, again, putting themselves seriously at risk.

No one does this as a conscious choice of something fun to do. They do it out of circumstance and they do it out of an addiction condition, which is medical.

• (1310)

The solutions are to be found, obviously, in harm reduction and in particular in safe injection sites.

I want to refer to a backgrounder that was produced by the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition on supervised consumption sites. What it has done is it has tried to summarize the research. We hear the Conservatives asking, “Where are the facts? Where is the evidence?” I am actually going to take a moment to go, point by point, through the findings that are summarized in the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition backgrounder on what research, peer-tested research studies, have shown.

What the research has found is that safe injection sites are used by people who inject drugs, including those who are at the highest risk. Therefore, when I talked about young male street workers, these people who are at the highest risk will often end up at the safe injection site.

The second finding is that they reduce overdose deaths. No deaths have occurred at the InSite safe injection site since its inception.

Third, they reduce behaviour such as the use of shared needles, which can lead not only to HIV infections but also to hep C infections.

Fourth, they reduce other unsafe injection practices and encourage the use of sterile materials. Therefore, users of these services are more likely to report changes to their injection practices and more likely to consult health professionals for assistance in crises resulting from injection drug use.

Fifth, they also increase the use of detox and other treatment services. The other side likes to point to providing a safe and warm place to inject drugs. That is not really what it is about. It is about providing a safe place, yes, but a place where there are other services on site. Therefore, when vulnerable populations build a relationship at InSite, the research shows 30% are much more likely to use detoxification and counselling services. Thirty per cent are more likely to actually try to get help as a result of being at the safe injection site.

Sixth, they are cost-effective. Research shows InSite prevents 35 new cases of HIV and three deaths a year, providing a societal benefit, in monetary terms, of \$6 million per year. Of course, I do not wish, at any time, to try to quantify the personal savings in saving three lives, because those are people's kids, people's brothers, people's sisters, people's parents.

Seventh, they reduce public drug use. I think the most disturbing thing that happened when the bill was being talked about by the government was that it sent out a fundraiser saying, “Keep heroin out of our backyards”. That is exactly what safe injection sites do. They reduce the public use of injection drugs. They reduce the incidents of finding needles on public streets. They reduce the amount of publicly discarded injection equipment.

Finally, they do not cause an increase in crime around safe injection sites. In fact, crime rates have gone down around safe injection sites.

Those are the facts. There is the research about safe injection sites.

I think it is very important, when Conservatives call for the facts, that we actually look at the facts about safe injection sites. We will find that they save lives, they prevent new HIV/AIDS infections, they save money, they reduce crime, they make our neighbourhoods safer, and finally, the most important one to me, they create community support for treating injection drug use as an addiction and public support for harm reduction measures.

When people in the Downtown Eastside were surveyed, it was found that over 80% of those who live and work in the Downtown Eastside support a safe injection site. Bill C-2 is called “respecting communities”. I would like to call it just ironic, but I think it is a cruel irony that when people are saying they need safe injection sites in their communities, the Conservatives introduce a bill that would frustrate that in every way possible and call it “respecting communities”. It is directly the opposite.

The bill aims to shut down the supervised injection site in east Vancouver and to prevent any other supervised injection sites from operating. Why else do we have 26 conditions, literally, (a) to (z), set out in the bill? Even if every one of those conditions were met, it would not require the minister to issue a licence. It only says the minister “may” issue a licence.

*Government Orders*

Once again, I believe the bill is actually a fraud on the House of Commons, a fraud on the public. It is designed to frustrate a very important public health measure. I will be doing everything I can to ensure the Conservatives see the harm they would be doing, rather than the harm they could be reducing.

● (1315)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to pick up on the member's last point, I have been sitting in the chamber and I have had the opportunity to listen to many debates on this particular piece of legislation.

It was interesting. One of the Conservatives at the beginning was debating the bill somewhat, and a comment that came from one of the backbench Conservatives was, in essence, that he just does not believe in injection sites. To what degree does the member believe that ultimately that might be the hidden agenda with this particular piece of legislation; that, in fact, there is a contingency of members from the Conservative Party who just do not recognize any value in having safe injection sites, even if the facts that are there before us and the history of our one and only injection site in Vancouver show it to be a resounding success story for the community as a whole and for the individuals who are using the facility?

I wonder if the member might provide comment on that particular aspect, that there are some individuals within the chamber who would ultimately argue that there is no need for sites of this nature, period.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Mr. Speaker, obviously all of us in this chamber hold different beliefs. There are some on the other side who, I know, have publicly said they do not believe in evolution. I am not concerned about that because that does not really affect my life.

However, when they say they do not believe in safe injection sites, that affects other people's lives. That affects their safety, their ability to get help. It affects their ability, literally, to survive. Therefore, it is not really a question of beliefs, because we have evidence that we can go on of the very positive contribution that safe injection sites make toward safer communities and better health for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech on the positive impacts of centres like these was very eloquent.

There is another aspect, and it is extremely odd that the Conservatives never talk about it. I am referring to the economic benefits of facilities like these. Consider the people who would go to such sites. They are less likely to become infected or infect others. They would be in a healthier environment. If they need water to dilute their drugs, they will not get it from a puddle or somewhere dirty. They will have a healthy environment that provides them with resources nearby, whether human or physical, to help them overcome their problem one day, and also to ensure that there is less collateral damage in the surrounding population.

It is a straightforward matter of economics that would save money. Hospitals would have to take in fewer people from these areas and fewer people would be affected by collateral damage. The

Conservatives do not talk about it, and yet they generally claim that they are better than the rest in matters of economics.

[*English*]

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to reality here. In my previous speech on the bill, I referred to the B.C. coroner's report from October 2012, which showed that on Vancouver Island, where I am from, there were 44 deaths from illicit drug use in 2011, with 16 of those occurring in my community in greater Victoria. There is a real human cost here, which means there is a need in my community to have something like a safe injection site, and for those harm reduction measures that both save money and save lives.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was appalled earlier to hear a question coming from the Conservative side in which a member said that we have "happy addicts". I do not know if he has ever met someone who has worked with people who have addictions or ever met someone who has an addiction, but no one is a happy addict. To hear that just shows where this is coming from.

The statistics that my colleague brought forward on reducing crime, saving lives and putting that importance on one life, and reducing communicable diseases, that was absolutely appalling. I would like to hear my hon. colleague's comments.

● (1320)

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, I heard the same comment and I think it betrays a very fundamental ignorance about the nature of addiction and in particular injection drug use on the streets in our cities. There is no such thing as a happy addict, and no easy way out of this medical condition. That is why we have the responsibility, as a society, to do everything we can to restore people with serious addictions back to being productive members of society and loving members of their families.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House for the second time to speak to Bill C-2, because this bill is very important to me. Unfortunately, I have known people suffering from addiction. I say "suffering from" because this is not a choice. These people need care.

To add some perspective, Bill C-2 is very dangerous. This is a Conservative attempt to deprive us of supervised injection sites such as InSite in Vancouver.

The Conservatives' bill adds a list of conditions for opening a supervised injection site in a community that are quite complex and difficult to meet. I find this quite unfortunate.

In my speech, I talked about safety on the streets, because our Conservative friends claim they are doing this for the sake of safety. However, I would much prefer seeing people who inject drugs do so in a specific place in the city rather than finding syringes everywhere. I also pointed to the absurdity of the Conservatives' decision to refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, rather than the Standing Committee on Health. That is rich.

*Government Orders*

That proves that the Conservatives do not believe that supervised injection sites are a health issue. However, these sites are not just places where people go to get high together. These are places where health professionals provide supervision, prevention and guidance. The fact that the Conservatives are sending this bill to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security tells me, on one hand, that they want to scare people and confuse the facts about supervised injection sites, and on the other, that so many health professionals support supervised injection sites that the Conservatives are having trouble finding enough witnesses to support their views on health. This is what I said in my first speech.

At this time, Canada has one supervised injection site, InSite. It was created as part of a public health plan by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and its community partners following a dramatic increase in overdose deaths in Vancouver between 1987 and 1993. At the time, the Vancouver area was also seeing a dramatic rise in the rates of communicable diseases spread by injection drug use, including hepatitis A, B and C and HIV/AIDS.

World AIDS Day is coming up in a few days, on December 1, so I would like to take a moment to talk about that. The Canadian AIDS Society, which was founded about 20 years ago, does excellent work. It is too bad that the Conservatives do not believe in the benefits of supervised injection sites, because sites such as InSite help reduce the number of people with AIDS every year.

The Conservatives like to talk about the economy. We can significantly reduce health care costs related to communicable diseases spread by injection drug use. For instance, AIDS can be transmitted sexually as well as by dirty needles. Supervised injection sites tackle this problem by distributing clean needles. Little things like that help. In my riding, an organization called À deux mains distributes clean needs to injection drug users.

I do not have the figures for hepatitis, but I have some pretty incredible figures for AIDS from a study done in 2008. I would like to share the total economic losses associated with each individual who is HIV-positive.

• (1325)

This was in 2009. If we factor in inflation, the numbers might be a bit higher today.

For every HIV-positive person, the estimated cost is \$250,000 in health care, \$670,000 in terms of productivity and \$380,000 in terms of quality of life. I am not sure what, specifically, is meant by quality of life, but I imagine it has to do with everything that comes with daily life, such as productivity, food and morale, which must be at rock bottom.

These numbers from the Canadian AIDS Society add up to a total of \$1,300,000 per person. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, roughly 69,000 people in Canada had AIDS in 2011, making the total cost \$4,031,490,000. That is a lot of money. I am not saying that all those people were infected by dirty needles, but some of them were. We could save a lot of money.

It is unfortunate that most bills, especially Conservative bills, focus on healing instead of prevention. The Conservatives never consider prevention. The same is true when it comes to crime. There

is no prevention, just healing. People are sent to prison where no one will look after them. It is sad.

No one chooses to be an addict. We rarely talk about the social determinants of health. If you go to Vancouver East you will see that the people who live there are not very rich. They did not get everything handed to them in life. I am very fortunate. I come from an educated family. My parents taught me the importance of staying away from drugs, going to school and getting a job.

Not everyone is lucky enough to be born into those circumstances. Through no fault of their own, people end up with rather serious addictions. They shoot up drugs. I imagine that no one plans to get to that stage. I doubt they woke up one morning and decided to become a heroin addict. We have a duty as a society to help them.

I would like to come back to the issue of discarded needles that turn up all over the place. When I found out that I was going to give a speech, I checked the websites of major Canadian cities. The Conservatives say that they do not want these needles in their backyards. However, the websites of Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver and Montreal indicate that all these cities have a program to retrieve used needles found on the streets.

The Ottawa website, for example, has an 11-step set of instructions for what to do with a needle found on the street. If the city puts this on its website, there must be a lot of discarded needles. Moreover, if on its site it says to be careful and that children should never touch used needles, that must be because needles can be found where they live. This is rather worrisome.

This is also the case for Montreal. Look at the website and this is one of the first things you will read: "In order to take collective action to reduce the problem of discarded needles...". Therefore, the problem exists. We know that there are groups in Montreal that would like to establish supervised injection sites, but Bill C-2, which the Conservatives will unfortunately pass, will block them. Thus, people will keep discarding needles in the streets.

In closing, I would like to thank the Montreal organizations that pick up these needles. Thank you to À deux mains, located in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, which is in my riding, Cactus Montréal, Spectre de rue, Pacte de rue, L'Unité d'intervention mobile L'Anonyme, Dopamine and Le Préfixe, and also several CLSCs.

These are not establishments where you go to take drugs; their mandate is prevention. I urge my colleagues to vote against this government bill, because it will be detrimental to the health of our communities.

• (1330)

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague who so eloquently spoke about the collateral damage of drug use. When someone becomes addicted to drugs, which is terrible, it is not just that person who is affected. Everyone around them is as well: family, friends and even the community. The member began to talk about that, mentioning dirty needle pick-up programs. Dirty needles are a problem in large urban centres.



*Government Orders*

I would like to give my colleague the opportunity to speak some more about that collateral damage because when we are studying a bill, it is important to look at what is best for the people.

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. In fact, there is a great deal of collateral damage.

In the government's place, I would try to take the opportunity, knowing that InSite worked in Vancouver and that it is a good thing. Furthermore, studies have been done. We have seen 30 studies published in such journals as *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*. They describe the benefits of InSite. It is thus recognized internationally, since studies have been published in such journals. They say that InSite is one of the most important public health breakthroughs in Canada.

Specifically, InSite has reduced the number of overdoses. Moreover, even though there are still people who do not go to InSite, injection drug users have gathered in one part of the city. There have thus been fewer needles in the streets. I would not like to learn that children in my community were walking in the streets, the schoolyards, or even the churchyards where people take drugs. That can have consequences for a young child.

In the government's place, I would realize that this is a good opportunity to set up more such sites in other cities, instead of preventing those cities from getting them.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in her speech, my colleague expressed disappointment that the government placed this bill in a justice context, rather than a health context. I want to give my colleague the opportunity to talk more about this, because it is truly a health issue, not just a crime issue.

All this bill seems to do is pass judgment on people who have an addiction, instead of realizing that such people have problems and need help.

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I said in fact that I found this absurd, and I thank my colleague for giving me more time to talk about it.

The Standing Committee on Health hears from witnesses who work in health care. The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security hears from witnesses from the public safety field. I hope that there will nevertheless be witnesses in that group able to argue that it is safer to have supervised injection sites than to have addicts wandering our streets.

That said, InSite has made its mark internationally. The facility is recognized as being good for public health. As I said, deaths by overdose have been reduced. There are also all the mental health aspects. People who inject themselves likely have mental health problems, so health care specialists are there to guide and treat them. Unfortunately, I do not know exactly where it is in my notes, but there is InSite and OnSite. People who come to InSite can be encouraged to go to the OnSite health care service upstairs. There they will find even more programs to help them.

If the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, unfortunately, it will not be possible to hear all those people from the health care field who can tell us what the benefits are. Ideologically speaking, we know the Conservatives are against such sites. They want to close them down. That is what they

want to do with this bill. I hope that some of them will wake up and vote against it.

• (1335)

[English]

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to Bill C-2, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Once again I am struck by the title of the bill, but I am also confused as to where the bill would be going after we have finished with it in this House at second reading. It will be sent to the public safety committee. I am finding it hard to understand why it would be going there when we are looking specifically at a health issue. Controlled drugs and substance abuse fall under health issues.

Once again I am forced to ask myself the question of what this bill is really about. Is it really about tackling drugs and substance abuse in our community? Is that what the bill is really about? Is it about making sure that our young people are safe? Is it about making sure that there are rehabilitation programs to help young people, and those who are not so young, who have managed to become engaged in addictive behaviour?

There are addictive drugs, and often people end up being sufferers of substance abuse not because of choice but because circumstances have taken them there. However, once we have identified them as addicts, so to speak, then we also know that it is a health issue and we have to treat it as such. Instead of looking at ways to tackle the very complex issue of substance abuse, the government once again wants very simplistic, headline-grabbing kind of legislation.

A few days ago, we were debating a bill called drug-free prisons. That legislation had nothing to do with treatment or rehabilitation. All it had to do with was a urine test that was already being conducted and was already being taken into consideration by the Parole Board. That is the only part that was in the bill, yet according to the government across the aisle, it was all about drug-free prisons. We begin to wonder, when we see bills like this one and the other one, if it is not really about appealing to the base. Is it just a modus operandi to fill up the Conservative coffers? I am beginning to think that is what it is all about.

The reason is that as a teacher and a counsellor who worked for a long time in the public school system and has experience dealing with people who are engaged in substance abuse as well as those who live with those who are abusing drugs, I have seen the devastation it can have on people's lives. All the research that exists says that just telling people they cannot do something will not get rid of the problem; instead, what we need is a multi-pronged approach in order to take on an issue such as substance abuse.

I come from a riding very far from here, Newton—North Delta, in beautiful British Columbia. In my riding we are very concerned about community safety. We are very concerned about gangs and we are very concerned about substance abuse.

*Government Orders*

The community wants to find solutions to help our youth, but I do not see anything coming forward in this House from the other side that is a proactive, preventive, or rehabilitative program. I see just words on paper and more or less ideological positions that are not based on science, research, or anything else. The fact that addictions are a health issue is not even taken into consideration. They are a health issue, and as such, we must treat them as a health issue.

● (1340)

That does not mean we are saying that people involved in criminal activities should not have consequences, but surely, at the same time, we also have to realize that we live in a country where even through our penal system we absolutely believe in rehabilitation. We do not believe that we just put someone in prison, shut the door, and that is it, because we know those people, young and old, are going to come out and come back into our communities.

When I look at the bill, I see that it is really a not-so-veiled attempt to defy a Supreme Court ruling that ruled in favour of injection sites operating when a community assessment shows that community support is there and when there is value to it.

I note my colleagues across the way have an allergy to science. They also have an allergy to research, facts, and data. Their way of operating is to just appeal to their ideological base and not take into consideration what will work and what will make our communities safer. All they want are sound bites without any substance so that they can collect more money.

There are over 30 peer-reviewed studies published in respected journals, such as *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Lancet*, and the *British Medical Journal*. They have all described the beneficial impacts of InSite.

Some may not be aware, but InSite is situated in British Columbia, on Vancouver's east side. Studies on over 70 safe injection sites in Europe and Australia have shown similar benefits, so InSite in Vancouver is not a one-off. Programs similar to InSite that operate throughout Europe have shown similar benefits.

InSite is one of the greatest public health achievements in Canada. I do not say that lightly. I have actually been on site and I have seen how it works. I have actually talked to the people who go in there, and the people who work there as well. We believe sites like this would benefit other cities where they are needed.

There is also this idea that InSite just opens the door and anybody can just walk in, that it is just a way of getting free drugs and free needles. That is very far from the truth. In order to use InSite, one has to be at least 16 years of age, sign a user agreement, adhere to a code of conduct, and not be accompanied by children.

Eighty per cent of the people living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside support InSite. Also, overdose deaths in East Vancouver have dropped 35% since InSite has been in operation. Surely that is evidence that we need to allow InSite and other organizations like it to be established so that we can take on this problem.

Once again, I want to appeal to my colleagues across the way. Let us start looking at science. Let us start looking at the research. Let us start listening to health professionals, from nurses and doctors to associations. Let us start paying attention to the real professionals

and take our guidance from them, and let us not make things worse and make our communities unsafe.

While ideologically you argue that you are fixing a problem, you are actually putting communities at risk.

● (1345)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Before I go to questions and comments, I would like to remind this member and all others that you cannot reference in your speech, "You cannot do this and you cannot do that". All remarks need to be addressed to the Chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, having been involved in the health care field, I regularly dealt with people who were absolutely desperate for the support of detox services and rehabilitation services. To be quite frank, the services that were needed were not there.

To the member, how can she support spending money when we do not have enough detox or rehabilitation services for the people who are truly trying to get themselves off drugs and alcohol or other substances?

We need to look at opportunity, cost, and the challenges that we have.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, here is a cost-benefit analysis: 35% fewer overdose deaths.

Let me also say that the evidence shows, and not just from InSite but from other sites in Europe as well, that people who are using InSite and the services there are twice as likely to want to access the rehabilitation and treatment centres that we have to offer.

This aspect is an integral part of dealing with an issue that is of major concern. The government, at the very time it is cutting rehabilitation and support for substance abusers as well as for other people who need rehabilitation, then has the audacity to say that this is not an effective program when science tells us it is.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier I referred to what I would classify as co-operative federalism.

In co-operative federalism, different levels of government work together. It is an issue that is important to me. Having formerly served in a provincial legislature, I come to the House of Commons understanding that there is a lot of crossover in many of the different issues facing our communities today. We need to be working hand in hand with the different levels of government and stakeholders to make things happen to improve the system.

In particular, the Vancouver injection site is just an example of one of the ways that co-operative federalism and working with the stakeholders can work. At the end of the day, we see a hugely successful program. The facts speak for themselves in terms of just how successful it has been.

*Government Orders*

We do not have the Province of B.C. or the Vancouver police calling for the dismissal of the program. In fact, it is quite the opposite: they are saying that the program is effective and that it works.

Would the member comment on the benefits of government working with stakeholders to make things happen and to make our communities a better place to live?

• (1350)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, one of the key issues is that all levels of government want to tackle the drug issue. However, the federal government's way of tackling it is to tell people they cannot do drugs, believing that if it stops giving them rehabilitation and support, they are just going to stop doing drugs. That is not going to happen.

Let me just read some of the other benefits. The fact is that there are 35% fewer overdose deaths. If that does not cut it, the fact that there are fewer needles out on the streets makes our communities feel safer. Among the people who go to InSite, there is a 70% drop in people who are likely to share needles. I will leave the health implications to my colleagues across the way.

As well, InSite users, because all these other services are available on site, are far more able to make use of other health care support systems that they need. As I said before, drug treatment is not a simplistic solution. It needs a multi-pronged approach. InSite is a key component and a very successful program, so why would we want to dismantle a successful program?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise today and add my voice to those of my colleagues in the official opposition against Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Bill C-2 is designed to make it more difficult to grant an exemption for supervised injection sites. The problem here is that at this time, there is but one such site, in Vancouver. This site was rightly granted an exemption, because it offers proven benefits. This bill is merely a reflection of Conservative anti-drug ideology. Yet tabling such a bill, which would prevent the establishment of supervised injection sites, will not eliminate addicts from our society. Unfortunately, they are here to stay.

I would like to acquaint you with some scientific data showing that supervised injection sites benefit both drug users and public safety. I will shortly be providing some additional information on public safety.

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse concluded in 2008 that such establishments provided a clean, safe and above all supervised place in which to monitor addicts' injections. As we know, a used syringe can be used by another drug user, and may transmit disease.

Next, the federal Minister of Health asked an advisory committee of experts to assess the impact of the InSite centre with respect to its objectives. The conclusions are persuasive. It was found that InSite encourages users to seek advice, detox and treatment, and this resulted in increased use of detox and treatment services. These

successes were achieved because of the exemption they obtained, which the government wishes to restrict.

It should also be added that the establishment of such a site provides a connection to treatment and rehabilitation services. Such a site gives young people a chance to get off drugs and opens a door towards rehabilitation. This is very important, and we are all in favour of it.

The qualified staff working at this facility monitor drug users and give them options to overcome their addiction.

I am presenting published facts, which the Conservatives cannot deny. They base their bill on the notion that public safety will be threatened by the kind of site we are talking about. I would like to point out such sites were established in response to concerns on the part of the authorities about the spread of HIV and hepatitis C. Such sites met the needs of addicts who were unable to stop using drugs by providing them with hygienic facilities. Furthermore, they also meet the needs of all those who do not use drugs and who sometimes find a needle in the street. It was thus a way of preventing the spread of drugs and disease in the streets.

In drafting this bill, the Conservatives pointed to the unsafe nature of neighbourhoods surrounding such sites. By imposing cumbersome administrative procedures to impede the creation of such sites, however, the Conservatives are forcing addicts to use drugs in the streets, in the parks or anywhere where children will be playing the following morning.

I do not believe that the presence of contaminated waste such as syringes or the spread of infectious diseases through unsupervised injections is reassuring for the public. I would like to emphasize this point, because I have witnessed the consequences of drug use in the streets. I will provide a few examples. We are talking about addicts, people who are already struggling with drugs. Let us take the example of a couple strolling in the park with their child. The child is playing in the sandpit, and suddenly he finds a syringe. Day care centres have complained about this phenomenon in the past. Children are playing in the park, and suddenly they are pricked by one of these needles. Obviously, they have to go straight to hospital. It is serious when people do not feel safe.

I do not have to look much farther: I live in Ottawa, 15 minutes' walk from the House of Commons. I still remember that last spring, when my co-tenant was clearing dead leaves from the property, she found a syringe in the front yard. Fortunately, she was wearing leather gloves.

• (1355)

We were afraid. We told ourselves it was serious, but we thought it was an exception.

A few months later, arriving home in the evening after my workday in Parliament, what do I see? A young man injecting himself with drugs in front of my home. We are not in a poor neighbourhood, after all. This man dropped his dirty needle outside a hotel. I was very afraid, so I told the police about the situation, and they arrived shortly after.

*Statements by Members*

The next morning, before I went to work, what did I see? Two women picking up leaves with very thin rubber gloves. Since my English is not particularly good, I did not know how to tell them to be careful, because this is serious. I tried to tell them about the dangerous things on the ground. I do not know if they understood me, but I continued to feel concern.

These women are working mothers, and they may prick themselves inadvertently by touching needles thrown down in the street. Drug users, of course, are thinking only about satisfying their need, and do not realize that their actions have consequences.

In some ways, these sites can help us to manage the social problems related to drug addiction. These sites do not just help addicts; they can protect all of us.

Another thing that troubles me about this bill is that it goes against a decision rendered by the Supreme Court in 2011. I would like to quote a key excerpt from that decision. It reads:

Where, as here, [the evidence shows that] a supervised injection site will decrease the risk of death and disease, and there is little or no evidence that it will have a negative impact on public safety, [quite the contrary,] the Minister should generally grant an exemption.

The court therefore ruled that InSite should remain open under the exemption set out in section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Although the court left the decisions regarding exemptions for future supervised injection sites to the minister's discretion, it indicated that:

...the Minister must consider whether denying an exemption would cause deprivations of life and security of the person that are not in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

It is important that any new bill pertaining to these sites take into account the Supreme Court of Canada's decisions.

In closing, throughout my speech, I presented arguments that show that supervised injection sites are safe, controlled environments that provide health and social services, and not just for drug users. They can also protect us and our families on the streets.

In light of such concrete evidence, the government must stop proposing bills designed only to satisfy its voter base and instead meet the needs of Canadians.

We are not living in an ideal, drug-free world. There are people who have problems that drive them to inject illegal substances.

It is our duty to offer them solutions. Preventing the establishment of the only services that can help them will not make their addictions disappear. It will even put us, our families and our children at risk of finding contaminated needles on the streets.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

### LEADING YOUNG PHYSICIAN

**Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to draw to the attention of all members the impressive

achievements of Dr. Paul Dhillon, a graduating physician from the riding of Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Dr. Dhillon has been selected as the winner of not one but two prestigious national awards celebrating the efforts of young physician leaders of tomorrow.

Not only has Dr. Dhillon trained at some of the most distinguished medical schools in the world, he served as president of the Professional Association of Interns and Residents of Saskatchewan, is an award-winning novelist and has spearheaded an initiative to raise considerable funds for a health care project in Zimbabwe.

Dr. Dhillon won both the Award for Young Leaders from the Canadian Medical Association and the 2013 Murray Stalker Award presented by the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

On behalf of all members of Parliament, let me congratulate Dr. Paul Dhillon for his impressive achievements and thank him for being an excellent example of the many young leaders who make Saskatchewan's future so bright.

\* \* \*

### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since being named the NDP's post-secondary critic in August, I have met with stakeholders, including the CFS, CASA, AUC, A triple C, the CAUT and Polytechnics Canada.

What was already clear has become crystal clear; that Canada lacks federal leadership on post-secondary education for first nations, that it has turned a blind eye to increasing tuition fees and is piling debt into the backpacks of future generations.

Even after graduating, young people in Canada face job shortages, unpaid internships, precarious work and now two more years before they can retire. Youth unemployment is double the national average, all thanks to the Conservative government.

That is why the NDP has called on the government to adopt our national education act and to introduce a youth hiring tax credit. That investment would create jobs for young Canadians and would give them the ability to pay down their debts and pursue their dreams.

Then, in 2015, we can work together to address the financial barriers to post-secondary education by electing an NDP government.

*Statements by Members***PERTH—WELLINGTON**

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Perth—Wellington, we are blessed to have some of the finest communities in the country.

In the 2013 Communities in Bloom competition, our riding was proudly represented by grand champion: Stratford and the town of Minto, which received the Land Reclamation Award for the beautification of their green spaces as well as their civic engagement.

Two recipients from the same area is no accident. Maybe it is due to our picturesque and welcoming small towns or our abundant farms and rich fields. Having the dynamic and cosmopolitan nature of Stratford and its signature festival, the finest in North America, certainly helps too.

Whatever the cause, there certainly is something very special about our area. I thank these communities and all our constituents for their hard work toward the preservation and enhancement of our wonderful communities.

\* \* \*

**WORLD AIDS DAY**

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Sunday is World AIDS Day. Seventy-five thousand Canadians live with HIV/AIDS. Great strides have been made in HIV/AIDS research and treatment by Dr. Julio Montaner and his team at the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS that developed the highly active anti-retroviral therapy, making it possible to foresee an eradication of this disease.

HAART reduces the viral load to undetectable levels, decreasing transmission rates by 96%. B.C. is the only province that supplies HAART immediately to everyone who tests positive and is the only place in North America where new cases have decreased dramatically.

HAART is changing the face of HIV. It is endorsed by the World Health Organization and adopted as policy by the U.S., Brazil, France and the United Kingdom. This week the B.C. premier signed an agreement with China.

Yet in the rest of Canada there are 3,000 new cases each year and increasing. The federal government refuses to meet with Dr. Montaner. I have written an open letter to the Minister of Health asking her to adopt treatment—

• (1405)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. The hon. member for Brampton West.

\* \* \*

**PRIME MINISTER'S AWARD FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE**

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to speak about an exceptional Bramptonian and of course that is difficult because there are so many fantastic Bramptonians.

Sukhdeep Kaur Chohan is a teacher at Hickory Wood Public School. Ms. Chohan is one of this year's much deserving recipients of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence.

Ms. Chohan has received this honour not only for her ability to inspire her students, but also for the advancements she has made in early childhood education.

As a leader in her field, as well as her community, Ms. Chohan has developed internationally acclaimed programs to support children, teachers and parents.

Of particular note is her home-based reading program, "Smarties Read with Me", that helps parents read with their children.

I call on my colleagues here today to join me in congratulating Ms. Chohan on receiving the Prime Minister's Award and thanking her for the important work she does in early childhood education.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PROSTATE CANCER**

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as the prostate cancer awareness campaign draws to a close, I would like to talk about this men's health problem.

In Canada, prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in men, as well as the second leading cause of death. Every year, about 23,600 new cases are diagnosed, while nearly 4,000 Canadians die from the disease. This means that one in seven men will be affected. Therefore, 33 of my male colleagues could develop prostate cancer. This is why research is so important. If the disease is detected early, the remission rate is 95%.

Accordingly I recommend that all Canadian men talk to their doctors to find out whether they are at risk, and especially whether they should be tested, since two-thirds of newly diagnosed patients have no signs or symptoms. We are not Superman, or invincible. This should not be a taboo topic to discuss with our doctors. Those who will not do it for themselves should do it for their wives and children. We have already lost far too many men that we admired and cared for.

\* \* \*

[English]

**MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this past week, I announced the second installment of our government's federal gas tax rebate to municipalities in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. More than \$14.7 million go to support local infrastructure priorities. Also, area municipalities will receive more than \$3.3 million from the Government of Canada's GST rebate program.

The rebate program has been extended, doubled and legislated as a permanent program, and it is now indexed at 2% per year starting in 2014. As well, the eligible project categories have been expanded to provide maximum flexibility for municipalities to focus on their infrastructure priorities.

*Statements by Members*

Important infrastructure projects create jobs, promote growth and build strong, prosperous communities across Canada. I am proud to say the communities in my riding have shovels ready to get the job done.

\* \* \*

**CITIZENSHIP**

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the past number of months, constituents in my riding of Calgary Northeast have been asking me one question, which is about the status of my efforts to strip citizenship from convicted terrorists. Despite the fact that over 83% of Canadians, including those who identify themselves as NDP and Liberal, agree with me, the opposition NDP and Liberal parties hate this idea so much that they shamelessly engage in an aggressive war, filibustering over days and nights.

I said this in the last Parliament and I will say it again. I will use all parliamentary tools available to me to ensure that the will of Canadians is made the law of the land. Violent convicted terrorists must be stopped from destroying the immense value Canadian citizenship has.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are used to broken promises. After years of alternating Liberal and Conservative governments, people unfortunately expect nothing more from this government.

Issues like housing, homelessness and infrastructure are no exception. We keep hearing in this House that no government in history has invested more in everything. However, the reality is quite different.

We still know nothing about the rules regarding the building Canada fund or the homelessness partnering strategy, and the Conservatives make empty announcements regarding social housing. That announcement was made seven months ago. We spend our time asking the other side to be accountable, but all we get is radio silence.

Canadians deserve better. They deserve a government of action that listens to their concerns, and that is what the NDP will give them in 2015.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

[*English*]

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a lot can be done in 17 days. In the first 17 days of this session, our government announced the Canada-European Union free trade agreement. Yet in 17 days the leader of the Liberal Party has confirmed what we on this side of the House have known all along: the Liberal Party does not trust Canadians and veterans with their hard-earned money.

The Liberal Party's chief spokesman said on Remembrance Day that giving money to injured veterans is "like hanging a case of beer in front of a drunk.... They...go and spend it...on booze or addiction". How many more days do veterans have to wait for the leader of the Liberal Party to fire his veterans spokesperson? Shame on the Liberal leader, shame on the Liberal Party and shame on the member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

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**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, citizens in my riding of Hamilton Centre have been following the hearings on Enbridge's Line 9 pipeline reversal and are deeply concerned. My constituents know that the 38-year-old pipeline was not designed to handle diluted bitumen, and they wanted their concerns to be heard. Instead, they have been muzzled as the Conservative government used omnibus bills to gut the environmental assessment process, and the doors on public consultations were slammed shut. This is unacceptable, and we cannot and will not support a process that does not listen to the concerns of citizens and puts rubber-stamping this deal ahead of ensuring the safety of Canadians.

New Democrats will continue to demand that the development of Canada's natural resources is done in the most sustainable way, and that the highest environmental protection and safety standards are met. Canadians also want to see leadership on transitioning to a new green economy, improving energy efficiency and tackling climate change. These are the priorities of the people of Hamilton Centre, and they are the priorities of the NDP.

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**HANUKKAH**

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, at sundown last night, Jewish communities around the world and across Canada began to celebrate Hanukkah, the Jewish festival of lights. This eight-day celebration commemorates the rededication of the holy temple and the triumph of the Jewish people over tyranny and oppression. In the face of insurmountable odds, the Jewish people reclaimed their historic homeland and won their freedom; so as Jewish families and their friends gather to celebrate Hanukkah, we light a candle each night to remind us of hope and faith.

Here on Parliament Hill, the Minister for Multiculturalism hosted Hanukkah on the Hill last night, along with members of the Jewish community and members of Parliament. In my riding of York Centre, home to a vibrant Jewish community, Hanukkah celebrations began at my synagogue, Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda, and in individual homes across the riding.

May the next seven nights bring the world much hope and peace. On behalf of our government and of all Parliament, I wish all Canadians celebrating Hanukkah a *chag sameach*.

### ETHICS

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just when we think the Conservative spin doctors have reached rock bottom, they create new ways to sink to even deeper depths. In a feeble and shameful attempt to cover up their Senate scandal, they tried to draw a parallel yesterday between the residency requirements of former Liberal senator Sister Peggy Butts and disgraced Conservative senator Mike Duffy.

Sister Peggy was a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame order and lived her life committed to a vow of poverty. As such, she owned no property; she lived in Nova Scotian convents. When called to the Senate, the Catholic Diocese of Antigonish gifted her with a small section of land prior to her appointment so as to meet the residency requirements. She donated every nickel of money she earned to charity.

To have Sister Peggy's situation compared to Mike Duffy's in any way is a shameful exhibition of disrespect and just another example of the moral vacuum in which the current government exists.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after months of confusion surrounding the need to improve the employment insurance system, we now have the figures and facts to confirm that there are indeed positive spinoffs for people who contribute to EI and for employers.

Indeed, more than 99% of EI claimants receive benefits. This proves that the system is working well and that it helps people who are available for employment.

Instead of explaining our reasonable changes to their constituents and providing them with the necessary information, the opposition parties have orchestrated a huge fearmongering campaign in our communities in Quebec and the Maritimes, based on lies.

Employers are pleased to be able to offer positions in their companies to people in their region first. The job alert system is an extremely practical tool for helping claimants find a job and apply their transferable skills, thereby giving workers greater job mobility.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

### ETHICS

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister demonstrated how he has cast aside his ethical standards.

Long gone are the days when the Reform Party wanted to replace the Liberals' culture of corruption that resulted in the sponsorship scandal. In fact, the Conservatives are perfecting this Liberal culture of no accountability and more than questionable ethics.

We would really like to know what the Prime Minister thinks of his chief fundraiser, Irving Gerstein. However, immersed in his world of half-truths, he refuses to even acknowledge the existence of

### Oral Questions

the person who tried to influence the audit by Deloitte, the disgraced company that refuses to be held accountable.

The Senate, this so-called independent institution, this supposed chamber of sober second thought, cannot even get to the bottom of this. The scoundrels who have won the lottery for life over there are laughing at honest people. To think that there are still people in this place who want the status quo. It is time to put an end to this damned farce. Only the NDP, which still has principles, can get the job done.

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[English]

### HIV-AIDS

**Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this Sunday will mark World AIDS Day. Too many Canadians continue to battle this terrible disease. Our government is committed to supporting these individuals. In fact, I am delighted to share with members that earlier this morning our government committed \$10 million to support two research teams seeking to find a cure for HIV.

These teams will capitalize on Canada's extensive expertise in biomedical and clinical HIV research. They will ensure Canada is a key player in the global fight to eradicate this disease and make a difference in the lives of people fighting HIV.

Our government will continue to work on behalf of people living with HIV toward minimizing the impact of this disease, both globally and here at home.

Congratulations to all those involved in the projects being supported today. I wish them all well in their world-class research.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### ETHICS

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Senator Gerstein contacted Conservative Party auditor Michael Runia from Deloitte to whitewash the investigation into Mr. Duffy.

Why did the Prime Minister's Office order Conservative senators to prevent Deloitte employee Michael Runia from testifying?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we saw today was that Deloitte appeared before the Senate internal economy committee. They took questions, and they reaffirmed that the forensic audit was conducted with the highest standards and the utmost confidentiality.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Conservative senators not only blocked Conservative Party auditor Michael Runia from testifying today, they would not even allow a vote on allowing him to testify. This is the very man Senator Gerstein illegally tried to influence to kill the Mike Duffy audit.

*Oral Questions*

Why does the Prime Minister have his Conservative senators blocking the testimony—

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

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair:** Why does the Prime Minister have his Conservative senators blocking the testimony of Michael Runia if they have nothing to hide?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, speaking of phonies, I guess my question to the hon. Leader of the Opposition would be this: When he talked about the bribe he was potentially offered, he said that he did not know that what he was being offered was a bribe, because he did not actually open the envelope. If he did not open the envelope, how did he know that what he was being offered was a bribe? Was it because he knew the mayor of Laval was crooked? If he knew the mayor of Laval was crooked, why would he have been meeting with him? It does not make sense. He is giving Clintonian-type answers to this. Either he opened the envelope, or he did not.

\* \* \*

• (1420)

#### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, according to NSA documents, they closely coordinated with Canada to conduct widespread surveillance during the G20 summit in Toronto. Did Communications Security Establishment Canada, or anyone else in the Canadian government, authorize in any way, shape, or form the U.S. National Security Agency to spy on Canadian soil? Yes or no.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we cannot comment on specific foreign intelligence activities or capabilities. Under law, this organization is prohibited from targeting Canadians. Furthermore, CSEC cannot ask our international partners to act in a way that circumvents Canadian laws.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** We actually know that it is prohibited. The question was did they do it. That is the question.

[*Translation*]

Communications Security Establishment Canada does not have the right to spy on anyone on Canadian soil or to allow a foreign partner to do so without the authorization of a judge.

Did CSEC get the authorization of a judge before authorizing and helping the Americans to spy on people in Canada during the G20 summit?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we do not comment on specific foreign intelligence activities or capabilities. I have already indicated that this organization is prohibited from targeting Canadians. As well, they cannot ask our international partners to act in a way that circumvents Canadian laws. That should satisfy the hon. member.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we know it is prohibited. We know they are not allowed to

ask. We know they need the authorization of the judge. The question is, did they respect the law? Yes or no. They failed to answer, like usual.

A criminal cover-up in the Prime Minister's Office; using a foreign agency to illegally spy on Canadian soil—what is it about obeying the law that this so-called law and order Conservative government does not seem to understand?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is judicial oversight, as well, of this organization. I would point out to the hon. member that CSEC's activities are reviewed by an independent commissioner. That independent commissioner has indicated, for the last 16 years, that CSEC has complied with all Canadian laws.

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure I speak for all members of this House when I say that ill and injured members of the Canadian Armed Forces deserve the very best care we can possibly provide. The tragic events at CFB Shilo two days ago only underscore the depths of despair and suffering caused by injuries received while serving. The family members have our deepest sympathy.

Would the Minister of National Defence please inform this House of what additional steps he is taking to ensure that every Canadian Forces member has the help that they and their families need?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our thoughts and prayers are with the families, friends, and colleagues of these departed individuals. I wish all those associated with these individuals peace during this difficult time. I can assure them that the Canadian Armed Forces is investigating this matter, and that is entirely appropriate.

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#### ETHICS

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative cover-up continues. Today, Senators LeBreton, Tkachuk, and others voted to block any examination of Senator Gerstein and Mike Runia, of Deloitte. Police allege conversations between these two were aimed at stopping Deloitte's audit of Mike Duffy. That is tantamount to tampering with evidence and obstructing justice.

In the language used by the fraud squad in the PMO, Gerstein was sent to get "Deloitte locked in". Exactly what does that mean, and why is the Prime Minister blocking Gerstein and Runia from defending themselves?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, as I just said a moment ago, Deloitte confirmed that the audit was done with the utmost standard of confidentiality. I think that is very good news.



At the same time, we know that, of course, the Liberals stand constantly in support of these three disgraced senators and former disgraced Liberal senator Mac Harb. What was inappropriate is that these senators accepted payment they were not entitled to. What is also inappropriate is that the Liberals fought so hard to defend these three senators.

• (1425)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, quite apart from Deloitte, the issue here is Senator Gerstein, and with him, the fraud squad in the PMO who pulled his strings. The Prime Minister needs to tell Canadians this: Does he condone attempted manipulation of a forensic audit, or tampering with evidence, or obstructing justice?

The Prime Minister says, if only he had known back in the spring what he knows now, all this bad stuff would not have happened. But Senator Gerstein knew. Indeed, he participated. Why does he still represent the government as chair of the Senate banking committee?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister stated yesterday, and of course, as the RCMP documents he refers to state, Senator Gerstein is not under investigation. What this is is the fact that Senator Duffy accepted payment that he did not incur, and Nigel Wright, unfortunately, repaid those expenses. Both of these situations were wrong. Canadian taxpayers wanted those moneys refunded. Unfortunately, the Liberals tried to stand in the way of that. We fought for accountability from those three senators, and we got it.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, unelected and unaccountable Conservative senators voted to shut down an investigation into audit tampering. This was an investigation into the actions of Nigel Wright, the Prime Minister's former chief of staff. It involved a backroom deal to pay off improper expenses and whitewash an audit, but Conservative senators voted to sabotage their own investigation.

Did anyone in the Prime Minister's Office speak with these senators about this investigation?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, what Deloitte said is that the audit was actually conducted with the utmost confidentiality.

At the same time, I have asked the Leader of the Opposition questions Canadians want to know, and they keep saying he refused the bribe. Now, if he did not open the envelope, how does he know that what he was getting was a bribe? He did not open the envelope, because he thought it was a bribe, but he did not open it. He was meeting with a mayor of a town. Could it not just have been an important correspondence? Something does not add up to me here. Either he opened it and knew it was a bribe, or he did not.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, something does not add up for me either, because my question was about Conservative senators blocking an investigation into wrongdoing by the Prime Minister's Office and other Conservative senators.

Deloitte inexplicably claimed today that there was no interference or collusion in its audit. If that is the case, how did a PMO staffer

know on March 21 what the audit said about Mike Duffy weeks before it was released?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Deloitte quite clearly said that the audit was done with the utmost confidentiality, and that confidentiality was maintained at all times.

Again, I contrast that with the Leader of the Opposition, who said that he did not reach out to police, because he had no proof that what he was being offered was a bribe. He did not know that what he was being offered was a bribe, because apparently he did not open the envelope, but then, later, he thought it was a bribe.

If you were meeting with the mayor of Laval, either you knew he was crooked, and that is why you did not open the envelope, and if you did, why were you meeting with him?

**The Speaker:** The hon. parliamentary secretary should remember to direct his comments to the Chair and not directly at other members.

The hon. member for Gatineau.

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is like a bad scene from a comedy of some kind, but anyway.

[*Translation*]

Senator Gerstein and Deloitte employee Michael Runia are key players in the Senate expense scandal orchestrated by the Prime Minister's Office.

Who gave the order to stop the investigation into Gerstein's attempt to manipulate the expense audit? Did that order come from the Prime Minister's Office?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the audit, Deloitte confirmed that confidentiality was maintained at all times. What this comes down to, of course, is the fact that Senator Duffy accepted expenses that he did not incur. I cannot understand why it is that the opposition seems to want to protect Senator Duffy.

It would be like the Leader of the Opposition accepting per diems when he lives in Stornoway and then saying that his home in Montreal is not his principal residence. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition does not do that, because that would not be appropriate.

I am hoping that the same standard he, I assume, maintains is the same standard he will fight for in the Senate.

*Oral Questions*

• (1430)

[Translation]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, why did the Conservative senators halt procedures within the Senate committee meant to shed some light on the role of Gerstein and Runia in the Senate expense scandal? The question is simple: why?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I reiterate what Deloitte said today in committee, that the utmost standard of confidentiality was maintained at all times with respect to this.

It comes back down to the fact that Senator Duffy accepted expenses that he was not entitled to. As I just said, surely we can agree on that fact. If I can make the comparison, of course, the Leader of the Opposition lives at Stornoway. He has a residence in Montreal. It would be inappropriate for him to claim his residence in Montreal as a secondary residence and collect a per diem when he is living at Stornoway. I am sure he does not do that. That is why we want to stand up for the taxpayers and maintain that exact same standard.

[Translation]

**Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is what happened. Senator Gerstein was caught red-handed. He tried to manipulate Deloitte's audit process with the help of an accomplice within the company. He was aware of the Wright-Duffy affair and agreed with all of that.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what standard of ethics he is using to condemn Wright but protect Gerstein?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP documents quite clearly state that Senator Duffy and Nigel Wright are the subjects of this investigation. As I just said, we all know that Senator Duffy accepted expenses that he was not entitled to accept. It would be wrong.

I guess the best way of comparing it, again, going back to the Leader of the Opposition, is that it would be inappropriate for him to claim an expense for his home in Montreal and call that his principal residence when he is living at the taxpayer-funded Stornoway home.

We do not think that was right. That is why our Senators fought so hard and why we supported accountability in the Senate.

[Translation]

**Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if Gerstein did not do anything wrong, then neither did Wright.

The Conservatives need to explain why one was shown the door while the other is being protected.

I have a very simple question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs. Can he tell us when the Prime Minister last spoke to Gerstein?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would have no idea when the two last spoke.

Again, I am having trouble following this. I know the Leader of the Opposition refuses to answer this question, both in public and in the House. How did he know he was getting a bribe if he did not open the envelope? If he not open the envelope, why did the Leader of the Opposition not actually open the envelope? Would that not have helped 17 years ago?

Does the Leader of the Opposition regret, 17 years ago, not coming forward to the police? Yes or no.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there has been enormous political fallout for the Conservatives since they propped up Gerstein at the Conservative convention with his lines about Duffy. Now, with the RCMP affidavit, we know that Gerstein was a key negotiator in the attempt to whitewash the audit.

Can the Prime Minister's person over there tell us if anyone in the Prime Minister's Office has spoken with Gerstein in the last two weeks in an attempt to contain the fallout of the damage that has been done to their credibility?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will endeavour to ask my colleagues when the last time was that they spoke to people. I am not sure how that is important or relevant to government business.

What I think is important and relevant to government business is the fact that the Leader of the Opposition, 17 years ago, could have stopped massive corruption in Quebec. The story just does not seem to add up. He seems somewhat uncomfortable, because the Leader of the Opposition suggests he did not open the envelope when he was getting a bribe. He suggests that he did not accept the bribe.

It does not make sense. How does he know he was getting a bribe if he never opened the envelope?

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I do not really know what to say after hearing that kind of bizarre claptrap, so I will just continue on.

Another key player in this is Benjamin Perrin. On May 21, Perrin said he never informed the Prime Minister about the negotiations taking place with Mike Duffy. Perrin was the Prime Minister's lawyer. The RCMP affidavit shows that he was one of the three key negotiators of a deal that is now being investigated for bribery and breach of trust.

Did the Prime Minister give Mr. Perrin, his lawyer, authorization to conduct these negotiations? If not, would they agree that Mr. Perrin overstepped his boundaries when he went ahead with this negotiation, yes or no?

•(1435)

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, Mr. Perrin is not the subject of any investigation. This is in respect to Senator Duffy accepting a payment that he did not incur, and Nigel Wright repaying that. That is what this is about.

Again, I tried to make the comparison, why we think it is so wrong on this side of the House and why we fought for accountability in the Senate, because it would be inappropriate to do that. It would be like the Leader of the Opposition accepting per diems at Stornoway and then saying that his home in Montreal was a secondary residence.

We know he has lived there a long time. I am sure he does not do that. That would be inappropriate and the Canadian taxpayers would think that is inappropriate. That is why we fought for accountability in the Senate so hard, and why we will continue to fight for taxpayers and accountability.

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#### GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying that he who pays the piper calls the tune.

Well, Deloitte Canada has received \$135 million from government contracts, and then they were hand-picked for the sole-source contract to investigate—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I am having difficulty hearing the question, so I would appreciate members' holding off on their commentary until the member is finished asking the question.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, then Deloitte is hand-picked for this sole-source contract to investigate the improper expenses of Liberal and Conservative senators.

I want to ask the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates if he intends to conduct and schedule a hearing and investigation into the sole-source contract. Will he compel the attendance of senior officials from Deloitte? Will he use the authority of his chair to compel their attendance to answer these questions?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question, which was already raised this morning during a senate committee meeting. It seems as though a key witness was prevented from testifying.

However, as he knows, he is free to raise this question with a motion during a parliamentary committee meeting if he wants.

As chair of the committee, I work for the committee and I will examine whether the motion is in order and is in line with the Standing Orders of the House of Commons and the committee's mandate.

#### Oral Questions

He is free to raise that question in committee. That is when I will decide whether it is in order. Then, it will be up to the committee to decide what to do with it, as usual. I work for the committee.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

#### ETHICS

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Natural Resources stated, "I do not question the conduct of my chief of staff". Chris Woodcock's misconduct includes: not disclosing his knowledge that Nigel Wright gave Senator Duffy \$90,000, an action the RCMP considers criminal; taking part in the whitewash of a Senate report; and taking part in a cover-up.

Let us give the minister a mulligan. Does he really not question the conduct of his chief of staff, Chris Woodcock?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP documents quite clearly state that Mr. Woodcock is not the subject of an investigation.

I would ask the hon. member if he could turn behind him and ask the member for Kings—Hants if the behaviour he showed during the income trust was acceptable. The member for Wascana does not seem to think it was, so by that same standard, I wonder if he will be looking for the resignations of the member for Kings—Hants and the member for Wascana.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP states that Patrick Rogers directed Senator Duffy not to co-operate with the Deloitte audit, worked with Senator Gerstein to get him to call Deloitte and seek to obstruct the audit, and ordered Senator Stewart Olsen to whitewash a Senate report.

How does the Minister of Canadian Heritage, a former police officer, keep Mr. Rogers as her policy director, given the appalling evidence released by the RCMP?

•(1440)

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, unlike a number of the members in the Liberal caucus, Mr. Rogers is not under investigation. The RCMP quite clearly state that they are investigating Nigel Wright and Senator Duffy, Senator Duffy for accepting payments that he did not incur, and Nigel Wright for repaying those expenses.

That was inappropriate. It was also inappropriate how hard the Liberals fought against the repayment of that and against accountability for these three senators, constantly fighting for the status quo, which includes the status quo in their caucus.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today it was confirmed in the Senate that what the RCMP has been saying is true. Senator Gerstein had secret conversations with Mike Runia, in order to stand in the way of justice in the Duffy affair. That is a very serious accusation.

Why did the government order Conservative senators to prevent Runia and Gerstein from giving an explanation?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what Deloitte confirmed was that in the process of doing this audit, the utmost in confidentiality was maintained at all times. When faced with the result of the audit, of course we know that the Liberals fought very hard to maintain the status quo in the Senate.

In contrast, the Conservatives in the Senate brought forward accountability measures in June, which Liberals were not in favour of, and when it came to expelling these three senators without pay, we know how hard the Liberals fought against that. They are always entitled to their entitlements, but they never seem to want to stand up for Canadian taxpayers.

\* \* \*

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance submitted receipts that were redacted before they were submitted. The minister might have thought crossing off personal items from his expenses was a good idea, but he should have known better. He should have known that hiding information violates the federal information law.

Why did the minister go out of his way to alter these receipts? Why will Conservatives not respect our access to information laws?

**Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would really like to thank my colleague from across the floor for asking this question today.

No rules have been broken. The redacted lines are personal items for which the minister does not seek reimbursement from taxpayers. I would like to be clear. Those expenses were not charged to taxpayers.

I thank the member opposite for raising this, because the article points out how conscious the greatest finance minister in the world is of respecting taxpayers money.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance handles his money the same way he handles the budget. He says what he wants when he wants. If this keeps up, we will need a parliamentary officer to oversee the Minister of Finance's expenses.

I understand that after the Bev Oda incident, he is wary of disclosing all of his expenses. However, we have a right to know what is behind those blacked-out lines. We have a right to know how this money was spent.

Will someone tell him to comply with the law, or is he another Conservative who thinks he is exempt from being accountable?

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

*[English]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

We need to have a little more order. It is getting increasingly difficult for the Chair to listen to the questions and the answers.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague again. I repeat that no rules have been broken.

*[English]*

The redacted lines are personal items for which the minister does not seek reimbursement from taxpayers. I would like to be absolutely clear. Those expenses were not charged to taxpayers.

I would like to thank the member opposite again for raising this because the article points out how conscious the greatest finance minister in the world is of respecting taxpayers' dollars.

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*[Translation]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives could not care less about the problems in our corrections system.

A recent report by the Correctional Investigator identified major problems with the programs targeting visible minority and aboriginal prisoners. Offenders leave prison without having accessed programs or having received the rehabilitation they need. Rehabilitation is one of the two main objectives of incarceration.

Does the minister understand why a lack of adequate correctional programming increases the risk of reoffending?

● (1445)

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

It gives me an opportunity to highlight the outstanding and exemplary work being done by our correctional officers in our correctional services, which help rehabilitate criminals.

We have a stupendous variety of programs that can be used to address minority issues in prisons. I have a list here that I would be pleased to table because it demonstrates just how committed we are to ensuring that prisoners can return to civil society and to protecting society.

I will talk more about that later.

*[English]*

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one wonders whether the minister has actually read the Correctional Investigator's report. He is ignoring the fact that our institutions have failed to keep pace with the huge increases in aboriginal and visible minority populations in custody. This is not tough on crime. It is a recipe for making our prisons more violent and putting Canadians at risk when our offenders come back into our communities.

When will the minister accept these recommendations and work with the Correctional Investigator instead of attacking him?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is the ethnocultural services section, stakeholders and outreach, CSC's approach to aboriginal corrections, the continuum of care model, the aboriginal program, pathways initiatives and healing lodges. He should read the report of the correctional services officer. That will tell him all the great stories of what we are doing for our inmates to make sure that criminals remain behind bars, but once they are out they are in for a great life contributing to this society and to the prosperity of our society.

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**PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA**

**Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, next week is the first week of December. Christmas is coming. The spirit of Christmas carries an almost tangible feeling of hope and goodwill. Many Canadians mark this spirit with festivities and decorations, something that the President of the Treasury Board has recently encouraged public service employees to do. Could the President of the Treasury Board please tell us more about this and share the government's position on the spirit of the holidays?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can do that.

'Tis a month before Christmas  
But I'll stand in this House  
To say Happy Holidays  
Not to bicker or grouse.  
I told the public service  
They could deck the halls  
Their offices, their desks  
And even the walls.  
Let's make sure public servants can show their cheer  
With garland, minoras or a red proboscis reindeer.  
'Tis the season of cheer  
Not partisan fights.  
So Merry Christmas to all  
And Happy Festival of Lights.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, sadly, today we have learned that the Minister of Health has approved another addictive, easy to abuse form of oxycodone. Canadians all know that oxycodone abuse has destroyed families. There is a safer version, one that cannot be abused by addicts. Yet, despite pleas from Americans, who are trying to get oxycodone off the market and out of circulation, Canada's Minister of Health continues to approve the unsafe version.

Would the minister not relent and reconsider her approval for oxycodone?

**Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under the Food and Drugs Act, drug approval decisions are made by Health Canada experts, following the department's independent scientific review process.

The Speech from the Throne was also very clear. Our government will expand the national anti-drug strategy to address prescription drug abuse.

[Translation]

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** That is nonsense, Mr. Speaker. Under the Conservative government in 2010, Canada became the leading country for opioid use per capita. Do not get me started on their anti-drug policy.

For months, American representatives have been putting pressure on the Minister of Health to ban certain slow-release products that contain oxycodone.

By allowing certain addictive products to stay on the market, the minister is hampering the Americans' efforts to keep that drug out of at-risk communities.

I know that pharmaceutical companies are lobbying the minister. However, by giving in to that pressure, she is endangering public health in both Canada and the United States.

Will the minister listen to public health experts instead of lobbyists?

● (1450)

[English]

**Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to take the opposition members seriously when it is the same party that is in favour of injection sites.

Those members do not believe in consulting communities about whether or not a safe injection site should go into a neighbour or down the street from families, children and schools.

It is our government that has taken serious and concrete action. In fact, we have time controls on companies that produce drugs like OxyContin. We have implemented strict controls in the public drug plan run by Health Canada, including maximum monthly and daily drug limits, monitoring the usage of certain drugs and real time warning messages to pharmacists at point of sale.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENSE**

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in the middle of the night, there was another tragic suicide in the Canadian Armed Forces. It happened in Petawawa this time.

There have now been three suicides in the past 48 hours. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families.

There are currently 50 boards of inquiry under way into this type of death, some dating back to five years ago.

*Oral Questions*

What is the government doing to prevent further tragedies if it is still investigating what happened five years ago?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do more of what we have been doing. We created the joint personnel support units to allow our ill and injured members to work with medical personnel, social workers, occupational therapists and others to assist them. We have increased the annual health care expenditures by over \$100 million.

That being said, any time there is a tragedy, of course, it is one too many.

I look forward to the report from the Canadian Armed Forces.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there have been three suicides in the last 48 hours. The minister says that the Canadian Armed Forces is investigating, but there are now 50 outstanding boards of inquiry on military suicides. Some are over five years old.

There have been no reports on these deaths, no reports on what could be done to help our soldiers who so clearly need our help.

Could the minister tell us how many suicides have taken place in the Canadian Armed Forces this year and what plan does he have for prevention?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have invested heavily in mental health support for the members of our armed forces. We have almost doubled the number of individuals involved with health care. We have increased the budget. We have set up the joint personnel support unit.

Again, with respect to the tragedies that the member has talked about, I look forward to the report on that because one death or three deaths are three deaths too many.

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, apparently, Canada granted permission to the U.S. National Security Agency to spy on G20 leaders in Canada during the G20 summit three years.

This espionage, including spying on some of the presidents and prime ministers of Canada's closest allies, could only have been authorized by our Prime Minister.

Why would the Prime Minister let a foreign agency set up shop on Canadian soil to spy on our closest allies? What does this mean for Canadian sovereignty?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian sovereignty has never been stronger than under this government.

While we do not comment on specific foreign intelligence activities or capabilities, CSEC must abide by Canadian law. It is prohibited from targeting Canadians. Furthermore, it cannot ask international partners to act in a way that circumvents Canadian laws.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative spin on this issue is just not good enough. Spying during the G20 makes one wonder if there were other reasons for those extensive expenditures. Was the fake lake so expensive because it had miniature submarines and underwater cameras? Were the number of gazebos so expensive because they were hot wired to the NSA? Security of this nature has to go right up to the top. The Prime Minister has to be involved right up to his eyeballs.

Would the Prime Minister come clean and tell Canadians why he provided access and facilitated this illegal activity?

• (1455)

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can tell you about CSEC. I should point out for the House that all of its activities are reviewed by an independent commissioner and I can report that for the last 16 years, and, indeed, under Liberal administration, the commissioner has indicated that CSEC complies with all Canadian laws.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, Cliffs Natural Resources announced it was suspending its operations in the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario indefinitely. Thousands of jobs are at stake, and the economic development of many communities in northern Ontario depends on the outcome. However, the Prime Minister does not seem to be interested in the consequences of the decision made by Cliffs Natural Resources.

Why are Conservatives once again neglecting development and jobs in northern Ontario?

[English]

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can certainly assure the House that this government understands that business decisions are made and sometimes business decisions are unmade. However, we as a government have been very supportive of the Ring of Fire. We understand Noront is still there and still actively developing its proposals. We have been there for training. We have been there for the dialogue with first nations communities in the area, as well as the other communities. We will continue to be helpful in the future as well.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board, appointed to lead the federal government's response to the Ring of Fire, is now missing in action. He once said that this project would "improve the quality of life for thousands", but when the first sign of uncertainty arrives, the Conservatives simply shrug and blame the province.

Why have the Conservatives walked away from the Ring of Fire?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I actually did not do any of that. I simply indicated that businesses in the country make, from time to time, business decisions and sometimes they reverse those decisions due to market conditions. Regardless of that, we have great faith in the Ring of Fire certainly as a concept of development that will produce tens of thousands of jobs for the local communities throughout the province and throughout the country.

We have been supportive in terms of our role and responsibility when it comes to training, when it comes to the dialogue with the first nations and other communities and we will continue to be so.

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**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that our children are safe from online predators and from online exploitation. We have delivered on our commitment to ensure children are better protected against bullying, including cyberbullying, by introducing legislation to make the non-consensual distribution of intimate images a Criminal Code offence. This legislation will also modernize the Criminal Code to give police the tools they need to investigate this new offence.

I would like to ask the Minister of Justice if his department consulted with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner before he proposed this legislation.

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hard-working member for Wetaskiwin for his work on the committee.

Yes, indeed, officials from the Department of Justice did meet with the Privacy Commissioner, at which time the report for cyberbullying between the federal, provincial and territorial governments was discussed. The report made a recommendation to modernize the Criminal Code and, in fact, Privacy Commissioner Stoddart had this to say:

I think it stands to reason that in order to literally police the Internet, you do need these powers. And if you want to be effective against cyberbullying, I would understand you do need extraordinary powers, so it doesn't seem to me inappropriate.

We have done our homework. This is a good bill that will help improve public safety online, especially for Canadian children.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, officials confirmed that, even after the minister's directive, crude oil from the Bakken oil patch—the same source as the oil in the Lac-Mégantic tragedy—is being transported without testing and without the appropriate classification. It is beyond comprehension. Even Enbridge is saying that this oil is particularly dangerous.

For the second time this week, what has to happen for the minister to take rail safety in Canada seriously?

[*English*]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have made it absolutely clear to the industry, through a protective direction, that we expect this crude oil will be labelled appropriately when it comes through Canada. If there is information out there that people are not doing what we put in our protective direction, we expect them to let Transport Canada or the authorities know so we can prosecute accordingly.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, only 9% of Alberta children are aboriginal, yet since 1999 they account for a staggering 75% of children dying in care. Increasingly higher rates of child deaths are occurring in first nations-run agencies. The reason given is that these federally funded agencies receive substantially less money than provincial agencies. An Alberta judge recommended Alberta ask the feds to end this disparity.

For the sake of the children, will the government finally grant the money needed to provide comparable care?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member raises an important question indeed. She should know that we are working with the provinces and with first nations agencies to deliver child services on reserve. We have an enhanced delivery program that is being implemented in six provinces where 68% of first nations kids are protected. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure these children throughout Canada get the same level of protection as other Canadians.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has made reasonable changes to EI to help better connect unemployed Canadians with available jobs in their local area that match their skills. However, there has been a campaign of fear from members of the opposition and it has been spearheaded by the member for Acadie—Bathurst, who has continually been saying that because of these changes people are suffering and the numbers talk.

Could the Minister of Employment and Social Development update the House on the facts and what those numbers actually say?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition members have been fearmongering regarding our efforts to better connect the unemployed with available jobs.

The member for Acadie—Bathurst in particular is grandstanding when he says that these changes mean the end of employment insurance for seasonal workers. His fearmongering is completely irresponsible.

*Oral Questions*

In reality, the facts are clear. Almost no employment insurance claims have been rejected because of the changes we brought in. Over 99% of claims have not been affected by the changes. Employment insurance will continue to be there for those who need it.

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**INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

**Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives like to create media events around the War of 1812, but they should also invest in its heritage.

The Grenville Canal, which was built in reaction to that war, was so far gone that it had to be closed. That canal is an important historic site in my region.

Can the government commit to restoring the Grenville Canal?

**Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

I would also like to say that the War of 1812 was a turning point in our country's history. That battle for Canada paved the way for Confederation.

To answer the second part of her question, we will take all her requests under advisement.

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the report of the Commission nationale d'examen sur l'assurance-emploi is clear.

The changes made to the program are not minor, as the minister claims, and the disastrous consequences of the reform have now been credibly documented by Quebec, not the minister.

The program no longer meets Quebecers' needs and is hurting Quebec's economy.

The minister's responses show disrespect for all the stakeholders in all regions of Quebec who took the time to assess the actual impact of the reform.

Will the minister respond favourably to the report and enter into an administrative agreement with Quebec to give it responsibility for managing employment insurance, as Quebec has requested?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is again spouting rhetoric about this matter.

Let us be clear. Quebecers receive \$4 billion in employment insurance benefits, but contribute \$3.2 billion in premiums. That is a surplus of \$800 million for unemployed Quebec workers.

Furthermore, our efforts to better connect unemployed workers with jobs have strengthened the labour market for companies that work year-round. In addition, because of the improvements we have made, less than 1% of employment insurance applicants do not qualify for benefits.

● (1505)

[English]

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Ken Cheveldayoff, Minister of Environment to the Province of Saskatchewan.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order.

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**POINTS OF ORDER**

ORAL QUESTIONS

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order relating to rule number 37, which governs our conduct during oral questions. In particular, the only questions that are referred to at any point in the rules for the period we have just experienced, that being question period, are “Questions on matters of urgency may, at the time...be addressed orally to Ministers of the Crown...”.

I can find no provision that allows representatives of the governing party to throw questions at members of the opposition.

The parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister evaded questions continually in the House today and instead turned around and put questions to the leader of the official opposition and also told the member for Halifax West that he should ask questions of the member for Kings—Hants.

I would submit to you that this is not a point of debate. I think it is objectionable, under our rules, to put questions to opposition members as a guise for evading the questions that are put properly to members of the governing party.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, it is not the practice of you, under the rules, to regulate the quality of the answers or even the quality of questions. However, it is a long-time rhetorical device. In many cases, the best answer to a question is a question that poses and illustrates that the difficulty is with the question we have been posed and its inconsistencies.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, it is well beyond your jurisdiction to get into assessing the quality of the various answers.

**The Speaker:** I think the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands will find that many speakers have found it not within their jurisdiction to speak to the quality of answers. The Chair's job is to try to ensure that questions touch on government business. As to how ministers or their parliamentary secretaries choose to answer the questions, that is up to others to judge, and not the Chair.

It being Thursday, I assume the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley would be very interested in posing the traditional Thursday question.



*Government Orders***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it has been remarkable that we have gone almost two weeks without a time allocation motion coming from the government. Should I not mention that? I do have some caution in this celebration. It is some small progress made by the government that it has not brought in the guillotine on debate, has not shut down Parliament for almost 14 days.

[*Translation*]

I should probably stop myself here, because Bill C-4 on the budget returned from committee this morning, so something tells me that I will not be able to congratulate them for making it three weeks.

[*English*]

How much debate is the government House leader going to allow on third reading and report stage before he cuts off debate, and when can the opposition expect to have the final supply day designation?

It is worth mentioning that Bill C-4 could touch on many important things for the visiting dignitaries from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, who are here all of this week lobbying the government to actually do something about affordable housing. Here is an opportunity in a bill such as Bill C-4 for the government to finally act and create those affordable housing units for Canadians.

We have met with the mayor of Nelson and committee members from Vancouver and across Canada. They have told us time and time again that the government has not shown up to this particular debate and that it is not helping the Canadians who need that help.

When will we see the bill? When will we see the final opposition day?

Hopefully we can make it all the way to the holiday season, celebrating the fact that the government has been unable and unwilling, finally, to shut down debate in Canada's Parliament. What a truly great gift that would be for all Canadians.

• (1510)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the opposition House leader with regard to the difficulties and uncertainty of scheduling when we are not using the scheduling devices that are available to us under the Standing Orders. I am certain that he will find that he is able to cope with that, but perhaps I will take his advice and his concern about the lack of proper scheduling here under consideration and see if there is an opportunity to please him by once again returning to it.

Before I turn to the business of the House for the week ahead, let me congratulate those who won Monday's by-elections and will soon be joining us as members. Once returning officers have done their part of the job, which gives them the title upon the return of the writs of election, and after the new MPs have taken the oath, we will have their introductions here in this chamber, which will be a very special memory for them and for all of us.

Since this will probably be the last opportunity to use their names in the House, I will say that we on the Conservative benches are especially looking forward to welcoming Ted Falk and Larry Maguire. Larry proved to be an outstanding campaigner when it

really counted. He overcame what expert pollsters said was a 29-point deficit in just 24 hours to win Brandon—Souris. This abrupt collapse of Liberal support must be troubling to the Liberal leader.

[*Translation*]

This afternoon, we will return to the second reading debate on Bill C-13, the Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act, and, again, tomorrow. If we have extra time, we will take up Bill C-12, the Drug-free Prisons Act, at second reading.

Bill C-13 will, as we heard from the Attorney General yesterday, ensure children are better protected against bullying, including cyberbullying, by making the distribution of intimate images without the consent of the person depicted a criminal offence.

Following on this morning's report from the chair of the hard-working, productive and orderly Standing Committee on Finance, we will consider Bill C-4, the Economic Action Plan 2013 Act, No. 2, at report stage, and hopefully third reading, on Monday and Tuesday.

[*English*]

This bill would provide support for job creators, for example, by extending and expanding the hiring credit for small businesses; and it would also close tax loopholes, combat tax evasion and respect taxpayer dollars. Overall, it is an important part of our government's ongoing agenda to place, as our top priorities, economic growth, job creation and long-term prosperity; indeed, they are priorities for most Canadians. I also will set aside Friday of next week for this important economic bill, if we need a third day to pass it.

Next Wednesday and Thursday, we will debate a bill to implement the devolution agreement reached with the Northwest Territories, for which the House adopted a ways and means motion this morning. If we can pass that bill at second reading before the end of Thursday, we would then return to the debates on Bill C-11, the priority hiring for injured veterans act, and Bill C-3, the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act.

To help with the committees' forward planning, Monday, December 9, shall be the fifth and final allotted day of the autumn.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### PROTECTING CANADIANS FROM ONLINE CRIME ACT

The House resumed from November 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act, the Competition Act and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour has five minutes left for his remarks.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and finish my intervention on Bill C-13 which is an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act, the Competition Act, and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act.

I want to talk for a couple of moments about some of what I said yesterday.

Bill C-13 was introduced with some considerable fanfare. Provisions in it would close the gap in the Criminal Code to make the non-consensual distribution of intimate images an offence and would deal with the definition of malicious intent.

This is a topic that the official opposition tried to deal with when we brought in a private member's bill, Bill C-540, in the spring, and subsequently encouraged the government at every opportunity to recognize the tragedies that were taking place out there as people of all ages, mostly women, had acts of violence being committed upon them. Whether it is called revenge porn or otherwise, people—sometimes partners, sometimes others—with malicious intent and with violent intent were distributing intimate images of those individuals.

I spoke to a situation in my riding involving 17-year-old Rehtaeh Parsons, who took her own life as a result of the situation she was involved in. She was allegedly raped, and the images of that were subsequently transmitted widely on the Internet.

I want to speak to that for a second. That young woman took her life because she believed that the worldwide distribution of those intimate images of her by her friends, by members of her community, and by others had sufficiently destroyed her reputation that she felt she had no way out.

Frankly, it is intolerable that the system was unable to support her. Her community, her schools, and the institutions and support services of the greater community of the Halifax regional municipality were unable to support her. As a result of that, the Province of Nova Scotia moved to make some changes, and I will speak to that in a moment.

Suffice it to say that the bill is extremely important for what it does in this regard. As I said yesterday, it is my belief and the belief of many on this side that had the government done what we tried to do with Bill C-540, which was to bring in a piece of legislation that was directly targeted toward the act of cyberbullying, then it would be unanimously approved by members of the House. We would move it to committee. We would hear from families, from people affected, and from experts, and we would deal with the matter and change the law. We would get it enacted and change it.

What the government has decided to do is to tie questions about the extension of its powers of surveillance to the bill. Many people, both in this country and beyond, have indicated that they have some concerns with that, and likely it will result in extensive discussion and conversation.

I want to add that dealing with bullying and cyberbullying means much more than just changing the law. We need to engage in national strategies. We need to provide supports. Whether through education or through health services, mental health and otherwise,

we need to make sure that there is a plan, that there is a strategy for educating and supporting people to make sure not only that people realize that bullying and cyberbullying are wrong but that the supports are there for the victim.

• (1515)

We will be supporting this bill moving forward to second reading, but I urge the government to consider our motion to split the bill.

**Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and for his ideas in regard to this important legislation.

I would like to know what concerns or fears he has in regard to the add-ons that the government has placed in the bill. These add-ons perhaps give too much power or opportunity for persons in authority to undermine the privacy of Canadians.

• (1520)

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, my primary focus in respect to the bill is the same that it was when I brought in Bill C-540: to change the law to close the gap in the Criminal Code to make it an offence, and make it clear that it is an offence, to distribute intimate images without permission. That is an odious and violent practice that has to stop.

My concern is that the government has tried to tag on other changes to the Criminal Code regarding surveillance powers. They are changes that Canadians are concerned about. Experts have expressed that it is an overreach by the government and by authorities. It may have the impact of causing additional concern and distracting people from the intent that I have, which is to close the gap in the Criminal Code and make it an offence to participate in the act of cyberbullying.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member a bit about the overreaching to which he referred.

Prior to Bill C-13's coming into effect, the evidentiary standard for obtaining a warrant for electronic records in many cases was "reasonable and probable grounds to believe" the commission of an offence. That evidentiary standard is being lowered from "reasonable and probable grounds to believe" to "reasonable suspicion". In order to be able to use the access to information laws to get records from a minister's office, the standard is "reasonable and probable grounds" to believe that the records are within the control of the office.

My question for the member is this: does he believe that ordinary Canadians who have electronic records in the possession of third parties should have those records more easily accessed than those that are in ministers' offices?

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member for Charlottetown's questions because they are very serious questions. The issues he raises are extremely serious, and they have been raised by a number of experts in this field over the days following the introduction of Bill C-13. Exactly those questions and the serious nature of those questions are really the basis of my concern. That is why I have urged the government to split Bill C-13.

*Government Orders*

It had originally introduced this legislation as being directed toward making it an offence to participate in the act of cyberbullying, which involved eight clauses: clauses 1 to 7, plus clause 26. Then the following 55 or so pages deal with matters that are not focused on the question of cyberbullying.

The motion by my colleague, the member for Gatineau, was that we would split the bill. We would deal with the issue of cyberbullying, a matter of sufficient consequence that it needs the full attention of the House. Then we would deal with the surveillance issues and the powers that the government would like to see expanded for authorities in a separate manner. These are two consequential issues, and it is incumbent upon us to stay focused on each of them.

However, my focus at the moment is on the offence of cyberbullying. That is what I want to see us deal with here today.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** Mr. Speaker, there is another part of this bill that deeply concerns me, and that is the provision of immunity to holders of electronic records, including telecommunications companies and Internet service providers. This immunity would extend to these entities such that if they were to voluntarily disclose information to law enforcement officials, they would not be subject to criminal sanction, nor would they be subject to any civil proceedings.

I would like to hear the views of my hon. friend with respect to that immunity that would be afforded, in that it would not be limited to cyberbullying investigations.

• (1525)

**Mr. Robert Chisholm:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very important issue. It is a very important part of the bill and it needs the attention of the justice committee and other members of this House.

When the Minister of Justice introduced the bill with great fanfare outside, wrapping his arms around the families of those young people who took their own lives as a result of cyberbullying, he suggested that was the focus of this legislation, and we took him at his word.

However, what came to be apparent very quickly when we saw the details of the bill was that it contained matters far beyond the issue of cyberbullying, as if cyberbullying were not important enough.

We are talking about a practice of bullying on steroids, bullying that has been torqued up to the extent that people who are completely unknown to one another can create the kind of violence and damage to a person's reputation that we have never heard of before. They do it in anonymity, without any sense that they are going to be held accountable.

It is incumbent upon all of us here in this House, especially the government, to recognize it as a scourge we need to deal with. That is what we need to focus on. The fact that the Conservatives have brought so many other important matters into this one piece of legislation is a question of playing politics, and it is unconscionable. I apologize to the families of Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd that the government is conducting itself in this manner.

However, as I have said before, I will stay focused, as I know my colleagues will, in ensuring that the matters relevant to cyberbullying

get dealt with and that we do our jobs as members of Parliament and members of the justice committee to ensure that the legislation that passes through this House does what we intend it to do.

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in support of Bill C-13, the protecting Canadians from online crime act.

The legislation would make Canada a safer place by closing the gaps in criminal law by providing police officers with the tools they need to properly investigate crimes in the age of Internet communications. If I may, I would like to spend my time today talking about the elements of Bill C-13, which deal with the new and updated investigative tools that the legislation would provide to the police.

I would like to emphasize that nothing in the bill creates authority for warrantless access to personal information. This is my first point because I want to make it clear that proposals for access to subscriber information from former Bill C-30 the protecting children from Internet predators act, which were so controversial and so very unpopular, are not included in this legislation.

Bill C-13 and its proposals to modernize investigative tools for police, represent a giant leap forward for Canadian police by giving them tools for modern technology and investigations. These are the same tools our international partners have been using for years. These new investigative powers not only provide police with the judicially authorized tools they need to collect evidence in a modern telecommunications environment, they also take into account advances in technology and the potential impacts they have on the privacy of Canadians. In other words, they give police the tools they need to effectively investigate today's crimes, while ensuring the privacy of Canadians is properly considered.

I do not think it is an overstatement to say that technology has fundamentally changed the way we communicate with each other. The possibilities and opportunities that new technologies open up for us are nothing short of incredible. However, with the great potential comes great risk. The Internet and other new technologies allow criminals to commit identity theft in Switzerland, while sitting in a cafe in Halifax. It has also facilitated the explosive growth of sexual exploitation offences, such as the distribution of child pornography. As we have recently seen, it can provide an online forum for criminal harassment and extortion two criminal forms of cyberbullying.

An important consideration for the legislation before us is that technology has changed the type of evidence left behind after a crime has been committed. Scotland Yard estimates that over 80% of all crimes, whether a fraud committed over the Internet or an assault in a bar, have some form of telecommunications evidence associated with them.

The legislative proposals in the bill will not only assist police in investigating online crime, but also all crimes that involve electronic devices.

*Government Orders*

The guiding principle for the bill was to ensure that the Internet and other new communications technologies did not create a safe haven for activities that were otherwise unlawful. To prevent this from happening, Bill C-13 proposes to amend a number of existing offences in the Criminal Code to ensure that the Internet and other modes of communications are covered. For example, proposed amendments to subsection 372.3 of the Criminal Code with respect to harassing telephone calls will not only modernize the language of that provision, but also make it applicable in some cyberbullying situations.

Because so many of today's crimes are being committed online and using Internet-based technologies, we must ensure that our investigative tools are designed with this technological environment in mind.

Another important element of Bill C-13 is the proposal to update the existing production order scheme. A production order is a judicially authorized order that requires a third party to provide police with documents containing information connected to an investigation. There are currently two types of production orders in the Criminal Code: those relating to financial information and those relating to any other type of data that might be needed to conduct an investigation.

• (1530)

Often the requirements of an investigation are quite targeted. In those cases it makes sense to create specific tools that are designed to obtain specific types of data that also reflects the expectation of privacy associated with that kind of data.

As such, the bill proposes to retain the two existing production orders already found in the Criminal Code, but it also proposes three more to deal with the specific types of data associated with modern technology. These would include judicially authorized production orders for the following: first, data related to the dialing, routing, addressing or signalling of telecommunications, which would be known as transmission data; two, data relating to the whereabouts of a person, transaction or thing, which would be called tracking data; and third, data relating to the tracing of specified communications.

This last type of production order is particularly important, as it would allow police, for example, to trace the origin of an email, which would be extremely useful for identifying someone who is engaging in cyberbullying, specifically criminally harassing an individual, but has used several IP addresses to conceal his or her identity.

As I mentioned earlier, some of the proposals reflect the impact on personal privacy that advances in technology have brought. Police have been able to get judicial warrants to track individuals or things for 20 years now. As we can imagine, technology has changed a lot in that time. Where we were once able to track people with only limited accuracy, there are now technologies, like GPS, that can track the location of a person with much greater precision.

To take account of this, the bill proposes to increase the threshold necessary to get a tracking warrant in order to track an individual. Specifically, the police would now need to demonstrate that they have reasonable grounds to believe, as opposed to reasonable grounds to suspect, that an individual has or will be committed and

that tracking an individual's movement will assist in the investigation of that offence.

The existing lower threshold warrant will still be retained for tracking things such as vehicles. We believe the new amendment regarding individuals is a significant privacy enhancement. This dual approach will allow police to retain the efficiency of the lower threshold warrant for tracking things, while increasing the privacy protection in situations of tracking individuals where there are greater privacy interests at play. This is an example of what we call privacy with precision.

The bill proposes to create some new tools designed to respond to the special demands of the digital environment, the preservation demand and the preservation order. These new tools would provide for a quick freeze of data. They would ensure that a person or business preserves a specific set of data long enough for a police officer to get a judicial warrant or order to obtain that data. Let me be clear, that preservation would not be confused with the types of data retention schemes we see in other places around the globe.

The bill does not ask a company to collect everyone's information and keep it on hand indefinitely or for a certain length of time. That is data retention and the bill is not proposing data retention. Rather, this proposed amendment addresses the highly perishable nature of digital information.

For example, a company might be required to preserve data related to a specific transaction that it would normally keep in order to further an investigation of identity theft. This data would be preserved only for a limited amount of time in relation to a specific investigation.

• (1535)

This kind of tool is essential to our ability to conduct effective investigations in an era where crucial evidence can be deleted in the blink of an eye. The preservation demand and preservation order will give police enough time to go to a judge and get the warrants or orders they need to subsequently obtain this highly volatile evidence.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to point out that one of the common myths I have heard opposition members and media alike talk about is that Bill C-13 would make it illegal to steal a cable signal. The fact is, it is already illegal to steal cable signals. This behaviour is prohibited by sections 326 and 327 of the Criminal Code. It is a type of theft.

The amendments proposed in Bill C-13 to these long-standing offences will update the telecommunication language to expand the conduct that it covers making it consistent with other offences. For example, it will add imports or "makes available" to the prohibited content in section 327.

The bill would also make section 327 a hybrid dual procedure offence, which would give prosecutors more discretion in their charging practices depending on the seriousness of the offence.

*Government Orders*

Further, the amendments proposed to repeal the definition of telecommunications found in section 326 and the criminal law will rely instead on the statutory definition of telecommunications in the Interpretation Act. This is not a substantive change.

In conclusion, I would like to add that the government undertook extensive consultations with stakeholders from industry, police and privacy advocates across the country in developing these amendments. With their input, this bill achieves the right balance between promoting safety and security and protecting the rights of all Canadians.

I hope all members appreciate the importance of this bill. Our police need modern tools for modern times. Bill C-13 would provide them with just that.

I have heard encouraging words from all sides of the House on this important debate and I urge all hon. members to give the bill their full support.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his presentation, which I followed closely.

Not so long ago I was a full-time teacher spending my days surrounded by teenagers. Some of them had already been victims of cyberbullying. People are saying this is an urgent matter. I would add that not only is it urgent, but we have some ground to make up.

In this new Bill C-30, certain items that caused division among us, including privacy protection, have resurfaced. I have some questions for my colleague.

From time to time, could the House not send a strong message to Canadians by unanimously and quickly passing bill?

Addressing cyberbullying and focusing our efforts on a bill solely devoted to this issue would send Canadians a very strong message on our will to do something about this.

Would it not be a good idea to split this bill to study both issues separately? We could make progress on the issue of cyberbullying quite quickly and come back to the issues that require further discussion later.

[*English*]

**Mr. John Carmichael:** Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of debate on this bill and clearly this issue is very important for all of us. We worry about our children and young people in an age where technology has clearly moved faster than legislation or regulation. This bill brings together a number of elements that we believe as a government fully integrate the need to address these issues at one time.

Incidentally, I agree that the bill should be passed quickly and unanimously in the House, and I have heard good things from the opposition and my colleague that is what should happen. We should come together and pass the bill as it is written. I thank the member opposite for his agreement on that issue.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I realize that the Conservative talking points on this bill are that there is no longer any provision for warrantless search.

Clause 20 of the bill, proposed section 487.0195, reads:

(1) For greater certainty, no preservation demand, preservation order or production order is necessary for a peace officer or public officer to ask a person to voluntarily preserve data...to voluntarily provide a document to the officer that the person is not prohibited by law from disclosing.

The next proposed subsection reads:

(2) A person who preserves data or provides a document in those circumstances does not incur any criminal or civil liability for doing so.

That is what we call the poison pill. It provides immunity for holders of electronic records to voluntarily hand them over to police. It is akin to a warrantless search anytime a co-operative organization or corporation keeps those records.

We all know that telecoms and Internet service providers routinely provide information to advertisers.

My question for the member is: Does he still stand by the Conservative talking points, given it is in black and white in the bill that there is not only permission but encouragement for record keepers to co-operate with authorities with immunity?

• (1545)

**Mr. John Carmichael:** Mr. Speaker, I will just repeat what I read earlier. In my presentation I spoke to warrantless grounds in the bill. Clearly that is what is in this bill.

Let me quote Jeff McGuire, Niagara Regional Police Chief, who said:

It is definitely a step in the right direction... The chiefs of police association has long been asking for some assistance from the government and some tools to deal with this type of new communication.

Clearly, we as a government believe that we have to deliver new regulations, new legislation to deal with current technologies that have moved so quickly. This bill clearly does just that.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague gave an excellent speech on this particular topic. We heard a number of speeches in the House on it yesterday, including from the opposition.

In general most of us around the table agree that we need to move forward on the cyberbullying bill and continue to tackle this problem. The minister has been at the justice committee, which I chair, even as of today, defending the estimates. There was a discussion about this particular piece of legislation. The minister clearly indicated that there was no such thing as a warrantless search as there had been in previous legislation that had been brought forward.

My question to my colleague is this. At the end of the day the bill is about protecting victims of cyberbullying. Why do you believe it is important for us as parliamentarians to move to help protect victims of these crimes?

*Government Orders*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Before I go to the member, I will remind all hon. members to direct their comments to the chair and not directly to their colleagues.

The hon. member for Don Valley West.

**Mr. John Carmichael:** Mr. Speaker, I am a parent and a grandparent. I have concerns about my children in this day and age of technology.

I have watched my three-year-old grandson navigate through an iPad, and I do not have any idea how he moves through the technology. Clearly, in today's world there is so much access to different types of attacks on our children. Obviously, entertainment is one thing that we want our children to have, but I think we also have to be wise in what we allow them to watch or see.

Clearly, there are elements who take advantage of our children and our grandchildren in this world. We have all heard horrible stories. A member spoke earlier about a resident in his community who committed suicide, with no hope, feeling perhaps that her life had been ruined.

This bill brings hope to all Canadians. It brings us an opportunity to put regulation and legislation in place that will protect our children and our grandchildren from those who would take advantage of them. I think it does exactly what it was intended to do when the Minister of Justice introduced it.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was intrigued to hear the member for Don Valley West say in his speech that the threshold for court orders in cases where it is personal information is higher in this bill than the threshold for things when, in fact, those of us looking at it would think that “reasonable cause to suspect” is actually a lower threshold than “reasonable cause to believe”.

If in fact the intent of the government is to make it a more difficult task to get personal information through a warrant, would the member for Don Valley West be willing to support an amendment to this bill to correct this mistake?

**Mr. John Carmichael:** Mr. Speaker, no, that was not the intent of my remarks. Clearly, “reasonable grounds to believe” would provide an element of security in this bill that we believe would meet the needs of protecting, particularly, the privacy of those who are being investigated and those who are victims. Clearly I believe, as I mentioned, that the bill as worded would meet the objectives.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is very important for me to rise today in the House to speak to Bill C-13.

Before I begin my argument, I think it essential to show the government how ready the NDP is to work with it. I will simply lay the foundation for my argument, so that it is not misinterpreted by some people in the House who unfortunately tend to turn our words around and throw them back at us.

I am very disappointed. I think of myself as still being young. I hope that I am still young. Not so long ago, I too was in school and was a victim of bullying. I think it is extremely important to demonstrate that a parliament wants to help people. As I have said

many times, the role of a parliament and a government is to give a voice to people who are too weak to defend themselves or who unfortunately have not had the same opportunities as others to be able to feel equal and face difficult times in their life. All of us have gone through adolescence. Some adults are also sometimes victims of bullying.

First of all, we were all on the same wavelength when my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour introduced his Bill C-540, because we had learned of a number of young teenagers who unfortunately had decided to take their own lives. Perhaps they were thinking they had no other way out. Today it is our role to reach out a hand to young people and to provide the resources needed by those who can help these young people see the light at the end of the tunnel, get through a difficult period and become accomplished and fulfilled adults, like all of us.

As some members have mentioned in their speeches, it is a great pity, because the government decided to vote against our bill, which had exactly the same purpose and objectives as the cyberbullying provisions in Bill C-13, which the government now wants to pass.

Why did they stand in opposition to our bill? We will probably never have an answer, but that is okay. The government has its prerogatives. What is more, this is a majority government. It wanted the privilege of introducing this sort of legislation. I understand. It has its prerogatives.

However, given the fact that this is such an important issue that affects so many people, it is regrettable that the Conservatives decided, as usual, to present us with a bill at least 50 pages in length, where only the first five talk about cyberbullying—and that is a considerably rounded figure so as to give them a little leeway—while the other 50 talk about totally different things that have no tangible connection to cyberbullying. That is why the government chose to move from a bill on cyberbullying to a bill whose title contains the words “from online crime”.

● (1555)

As I said, and this is precisely why I wanted to make the basis of my argument clear right from the beginning, cyberbullying is a problem, and we as legislators have a duty to pass laws to protect young Canadians.

Notwithstanding the respect I owe the government, my argument will unfortunately have to identify certain shortcomings and certain problems in this bill that the government says is intended to address cyberbullying. I would like the people watching today to know that we have asked the government to divide the bill so that the provisions on cyberbullying can be given expeditious examination. Indeed, as many of my colleagues have said, we are all in agreement. That way, we could demonstrate to Canadians that we are prepared, as parliamentarians, to work together to pass positive legislation that will have a tangible impact on the lives of young Canadians.

*Government Orders*

With the other 50 pages of this bill, which deal with subjects as broad as terrorism, banking services, telecommunications services and so on, we could make a second bill. We could study it in depth, with the experts and the institutions, to know exactly where we are going. In this way we could amend and modernize Canada's criminal legislation, but—and I emphasize this—still respect our institutions, Parliament and, above all, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives always try to use wedge issues to force their bills down the opposition's throat. They use extremely sensitive issues in order to usher in by the back door bills that would require us to put on our legislator's hat and address these provisions in a logical and informed manner, in committee of course.

I would like to draw the hon. members' attention to three little points before beginning to address the government's shortcomings and missteps in this matter. For example, on cyberbullying, the Criminal Code has to be modernized. We have to ensure that future victims will be protected. As my colleague from Gatineau was saying, the parents of certain victims have said that, yes, this bill might have helped or even saved their child. No one in the House will say otherwise. The cyberbullying provisions need to be passed as quickly as possible.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that the government stated in its throne speech that it intended to invest in addressing bullying. Bill C-13 was probably part of the first step in that direction, but here we are talking about long-term prevention. However the government voted against our motion to have Parliament consider the issue of bullying in order to adopt a national strategy for helping the people on the ground who must be able to support young people going through a difficult period. Unfortunately, as I have said, the government voted against that motion.

Bill C-13 is a step in the right direction, and we thank the government for having taken the demands of Canadians and Canadian families seriously. However, why did the government vote against a motion that did not require it to do anything, not even to pass a bill? That motion called on Parliament to consider ways of preventing bullying.

I would really like to put the emphasis on prevention. I have a report that was produced by a youth round table. These are young people between the ages of 12 and 17 in Pointe-aux-Trembles, in east Montreal, in my riding.

● (1600)

This round table considered the issue of youth felt to be at risk of joining street gangs or criminal organizations.

The report says that 50% of youth at risk of joining a street gang or a criminal organization said they had been victims of violence. It also says that bullying is the form of violence most cited in the open question asked of the group of young people most at risk, followed by physical violence and verbal abuse. Bullying is therefore the main source of violence among these young people. The report also cites feelings of depression.

It is important to mention that the government's bill includes clauses on cyberbullying. However those clauses cover only

offences of a sexual nature. They refer to the non-consensual distribution of intimate images.

I do not want my remarks to be misinterpreted. This is a good thing, except that certain cases, such as situations where people receive repeated hate messages, are not covered in the bill's clauses on cyberbullying.

I understand that this is a step in the right direction, but if the government truly intends to prevent bullying and to help workers on the ground prevent bullying among young people, these things have to be considered here. A national anti-bullying strategy is extremely important. That is what the people on the ground are saying.

I have a report that concerns only my riding of La Pointe-de-l'Île. However I am fairly certain that the situation is the same in every riding. The people on the ground need a strategy, money and assistance. Therefore, if the government truly intends to help victims of bullying, I hope that Bill C-13 is just a first step in the right direction. This is extremely important.

With regard to the example I was giving of a person receiving text messages, emails and so on, I hope that all of these elements will be considered by the government in the context of an even more general approach to the prevention of bullying.

The minister has rightly expressed his interest in this type of case. He is concerned about the problem of bullying. I sincerely hope that he is listening to my speech today and taking note of what I have said.

It is very important to mention that we really would have liked to see the minister decide to split the bill in two.

We always have to put on our legislator's hat in opposition because the Conservatives unfortunately decide to disregard their responsibilities and we have to point out to them certain deficiencies in their bills.

I really find that unfortunate because we know that several bills have been, or will be, challenged in the courts. It is important for the Conservatives to realize that we must listen to Canadians and to victims.

I want no one to misinterpret my comments, but at same time we have to tell ourselves that the legislation we pass here has an impact on everyone across Canada. It is important to debate here and to have experts testify in committee so that we can pass the best legislation for our fellow citizens.

I would like to mention that my colleague from British Columbia introduced Bill C-279. It is very important and I hope the minister will take note of it. That bill is currently before the Senate.

Clause 12 of Bill C-13 amends the list of groups in the Criminal Code section on hate crimes.

*Government Orders*

•(1605)

It is important to understand that gender identity is not included in Bill C-13. Consequently, there may be a contradiction between two acts. Bill C-279 has been passed by Parliament and is currently before the Senate. That is why the bill must be divided. Some problems absolutely must be examined in depth. It is unfortunate that the victims of bullying and their families have to wait longer than they should for us to legislate on cyberbullying. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have decided to use this problem as a way to pass an omnibus bill.

Now I will talk about the bad aspects of the bill. We must put on our legislator's hat and clearly assess the problems the committee will have to face. Clause 20 of the bill concerns new procedures for obtaining warrants. As the minister said, the provisions are subject to the judge's interpretation. A warrant is therefore needed. However, it targets metadata. Based on the language the minister uses in the bill, the threshold for obtaining warrants that target metadata is lower. We are talking here about "reasonable grounds to suspect", not "reasonable and probable grounds". This will have to be examined with the bar associations and with the experts to determine the language that should be used in the bill so that all warrants are subject to the same burden of proof in the courts.

The bill encourages telecommunications businesses and Internet service providers to respond, without a court order, to requests for information concerning their customers and grants them criminal and civil immunity should they decide to grant those requests. It is extremely important to say that most people agree that the first part of the bill, which concerns cyberbullying, is good. It is really unfortunate that the Conservatives decided to include all kinds of different provisions.

I spoke about terrorism in particular. Why does the bill concern terrorism when we are talking about cyberbullying? Several questions have been raised about companies and the provision of user data to police. I think we really need to ask the experts, such as the Privacy Commissioner, to write a report on the bill. We really must put the necessary tools in place so that authorities are able to enforce the law since the framework of the bill calls for that. It is very important to do that based on expertise specific to the various acts, such as the Competition Act, for example.

I am really pleased to have had a chance to speak to the bill. I can hardly wait for my colleagues' questions.

•(1610)

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her speech. I agree with most of what she had to say.

I have a question about the credibility of this government after some of the bills we have seen, like Vic Toews' e-snooping bill. In response to Canadians' reaction to this bill, the former justice minister, now the Minister of National Defence, made an announcement. He said:

[*English*]

We will not be proceeding with Bill C-30 and any attempts that we will continue to have to modernize the Criminal Code will not contain the measures contained in C-30, including the warrantless mandatory disclosure of basic subscriber information or the requirement for telecommunications service providers to build intercept

capability within their systems. We've listened to the concerns of Canadians who have been very clear on this and responding to that.

The bill before us has 47 clauses, 37 of which have been lifted from Bill C-30. I would appreciate my colleague's comments on whether we can take the government at its word in terms of its interpretation of the bill, given that broken promise.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Ève Pécelet:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for participating in the debate on Bill C-13.

Unfortunately, this government tends to use wedge issues to slip in some provisions or principles that may not necessarily be the best, even though it knows that Canadians may not want them. It has done this several times. Just look at all of the omnibus budget implementation bills we have had.

As for my colleague's question, I unfortunately do not think we can trust the government. However, there are some things to look at in this bill. That is exactly why he agrees that the bill should be divided, as my colleague from Gatineau suggested, so that we can pass the sections on cyberbullying as quickly as possible and then study the very worrisome provisions more carefully in committee.

[*English*]

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, Canadians from coast to coast to coast have been touched and deeply saddened by the tragic deaths of Rehtaeh Parsons, Amanda Todd, and so many others. My NDP colleagues and I believe that we need to do everything we can to prevent that cyberbullying.

In fact, I was delighted, just this week, when I got a number of postcards from members of the Catholic Women's League in my riding of Hamilton Mountain as well as others in our community who want us to take action not only to develop a national strategy to stop cyberbullying but to stop the distribution of intimate images.

What has become clear to us is that the lack of legal tools available to intervene when intimate images are being distributed without consent must be addressed urgently. That is why my colleague, the NDP member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, tabled a private member's bill to address that very issue. We wish the Conservatives had just taken this opportunity to work with us on this bill months ago instead of delaying and complicating the issue.



*Government Orders*

We would have hoped that the government would have been reasonable and would have presented stand-alone legislation to accomplish that goal, but of course, as we know today, it did not. In fact, what we have now, as the member rightly pointed out, is a bill that addresses cyberbullying but also gives police heightened powers of surveillance to track terror suspects as well as individuals who use computer programs to gain unpaid access to WiFi or cable TV services.

Really, that is not what should have been at stake here. I wonder if the member could tell me whether she agrees that this is cynical and disappointing and that there is a whole bunch of irrelevant stuff in the bill that is going to distract from the legitimate discussion on how to fine tune the bill to get it absolutely right for those Canadians who are desperate for a national anti-cyberbullying strategy.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Ève Pécelet:** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that my colleague is showing just how much cyberbullying affects all Canadians, in her riding and across Canada.

That is exactly why I started my speech by saying that I feel bad for the victims and their families that the government is using them to force another omnibus bill on us.

Unfortunately, this shows that bullying is not the Conservatives' priority. If it were, they would have supported our Bill C-540 and our motion to create a national bullying prevention strategy.

• (1615)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting bill, to say the least. The Liberal member for Vancouver Centre also had a private member's bill that dealt with cyberbullying. I suspect that if we were to canvass the House, we would find unanimous support for dealing with cyberbullying. There is no doubt that there is a need for legislation that would enhance our laws and be more effective. There is no doubt about that. All members of Parliament want to see something happen on this front.

If the government really and truly wanted to, given that both the Liberals and New Democrats have expressed a willingness to see this type of legislation and the minister has talked about the importance of it, there is no reason whatsoever that we could not have cyberbullying legislation passed and in place before Christmas. That could be done very easily without any form of time allocation. All it would take would be the goodwill of the government to talk with the appropriate representatives of the parties, and we could make that happen today. We could put in place a mechanism that would ensure that there is anti-cyberbullying legislation today. We could do that.

I am wondering if the member might want to comment and maybe indicate her party's support for an initiative, as I have explained it.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Ève Pécelet:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

In point of fact, we did so yesterday. A motion was made for unanimous consent to divide the bill. The cyberbullying provisions would have been deemed read and referred to committee, for

consideration to begin directly and for those provisions to be passed as quickly as possible. A second bill would have been created for all the other content in the bill, which has to do with things other than cyberbullying and online crime.

I would just like to say that in this bill, which is over 50 pages long, only the first three or four pages deal with cyberbullying; the remainder deal with other things, such as terrorism and telecommunications data.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île for her very interesting speech. I would like to congratulate her and to congratulate the people of La Pointe-de-l'Île who elected such a hard-working young woman, who is here beside me every day. I am very proud of her, and I am sure that the people of her constituency are too.

This bill is very important, but unfortunately, the Conservatives decided to include things that have nothing to do with cyberbullying. For example, there is a subclause on terrorists and something else on people who steal cable television signals, which has absolutely nothing to do with cyberbullying.

Can she tell me why the Conservatives would have done that?

**Ms. Ève Pécelet:** Mr. Speaker, I believe it is clear. The Conservatives are using bullying as a lever to push through the rest of their legislation.

I know that bullying is an issue that affects everyone, and I know that the government wants to legislate against it. On the other hand, unfortunately, the Conservatives are showing that they have neither tact nor respect for this kind of issue.

Why not have drafted two bills, one on bullying and another on online crime? I did not hear any reason. No Conservative member will be able to demonstrate to me that there was a good reason to put all these things in an omnibus bill.

• (1620)

[*English*]

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been consultations among the parties, and I believe that if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion: I move that this House designate January 21 as Lincoln Alexander Day.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville.

**Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and take part in this debate today.

*Government Orders*

As all members of this House will agree, cyberbullying is an extremely disturbing phenomenon. When I heard the stories of Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh Parsons in the media, I was truly saddened to learn what they had to go through and the pain they had to suffer, which unfortunately led them to suicide.

We have talked at length about Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh Parsons, of course, but I want to emphasize that many young people whom we will never hear about have also been victims of cyberbullying and have unfortunately decided to commit suicide as result of this scourge. It is extremely important that we work together as parliamentarians and do everything we can to find solutions to this absolutely appalling phenomenon.

Bullying is obviously nothing new. People have been talking about it for a long time, particularly in the schools, and I myself was bullied when I was young. However, bullying has changed with new technologies.

New technologies afford excellent opportunities. They enable people to learn quickly, to share stories and to socialize without even knowing the other person. Unfortunately, they also make it possible, for example, to distribute pictures of a person against that person's wishes, especially pictures that can harm the person, as in the cases of Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh Parsons.

Another aspect of cyberbullying underscores how important it is to take action. Bullying used to occur more in school environments, among a group of friends, but young people were safe when they got home to a no-bullying zone. In the case of cyberbullying, that no-bullying zone unfortunately no longer exists now that there are social media.

Now, when young people get home from school, they open Facebook, Twitter or whatever social medium they may use, and they can see negative comments or photographs published without their consent. Amanda Todd changed schools several times in an attempt to start over. Unfortunately, when photographs are posted on the Internet, they stay there forever. You can never completely delete what is posted there.

That is why one part of this bill is important, and I do mean one part. Only four pages of this 53-page bill address cyberbullying.

I am going to take the time to congratulate my colleagues from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for raising these issues in the House of Commons. I know that much of what my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour proposed wound up in this bill. I am really proud of that because this is an extremely important issue.

The bill will create a provision on cyberbullying stating that:

Everyone who knowingly publishes, distributes, transmits, sells, makes available or advertises an intimate image of a person knowing that the person depicted in the image did not give their consent to that conduct, or being reckless as to whether or not that person gave their consent to that conduct, is guilty...

This provision is extremely important. I am convinced that every member of the House of Commons would vote now to pass it at all three readings in order to bring it into force.

●(1625)

The problem is that this issue has unfortunately been used. There are four pages on cyberbullying. What did the government do? It included about 50 pages on lawful access in a bill about cyberbullying. There is no connection.

The police admittedly need certain powers to act in such cases, but lawful access could have been treated as a separate issue, particularly when the bill talks about, for example, terrorism and software that has no bearing on the provision. Thus, everyone who distributes, transmits, sells or makes available an intimate image of a person is guilty of an offence. That has no bearing.

I am extremely concerned about the fact that cyberbullying has been used in order to propose provisions that, as everyone knows, have been highly controversial.

I have to say, all the same, that I am happy that the Conservatives did listen a little. This happened thanks to the work of the whole community of people concerned about protecting privacy and all those who stood up to combat measures that were going to make it possible to disseminate personal data without a warrant and require Internet service providers to set up an entire infrastructure for online snooping.

I am happy that these measures are not contained in Bill C-13. However, there are other measures that are very worrying. What is most disturbing is that tragic stories about cyberbullying, like the cases of Rehtaeh Parsons, Amanda Todd and all the other young victims of cyberbullying, have been used in order to introduce measures respecting lawful access. It has no connection and merits a separate debate.

I would prefer that we speak today strictly about cyberbullying, because it is so important.

I would like to use the 20 minutes of speaking time allowed me to talk exclusively about cyberbullying. I am obliged, however, to talk about all the other controversial and disturbing measures relating to lawful access.

A motion was moved to divide the bill, so that we could talk strictly about cyberbullying and thus expedite consideration of that portion of the bill.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives refused. They wanted to use cyberbullying to push through a range of provisions respecting online access that threaten the protection of privacy. The victims deserve a separate debate. They really do deserve it, and so do the families. We should debate cyberbullying alone, and not lawful access.

For lack of co-operation from the Conservatives, however, I will talk about lawful access. As the NDP critic on digital issues, I have done a great deal of work on this one. I have consulted people all across Canada concerning the protection of privacy and lawful access. I asked them where the limit lay as far as they were concerned, and what they found disturbing.

*Government Orders*

Four aspects are particularly troubling and they are of great concern to those who are worried about protecting privacy. I, too, am concerned about them. I believe that they deserve the full attention of the committee that studies this bill.

First of all, this bill, which is supposed to deal solely with cyberbullying, lowers the threshold for obtaining personal information. I am talking about metadata, transmission data and tracking data. I have often heard people say that metadata do not really provide any information.

I want to explain what metadata include. They include information provided by an email or telephone call: location, time, person contacted and search history. Metadata can provide plenty of information.

It seems to me that the whole debate around metadata and all of the information that can be gleaned from them really began in the United States, particularly with all of Mr. Snowden's revelations.

• (1630)

There is a new threshold. We have moved from “reasonable grounds to suspect” to “reasonable grounds to believe”. The threshold is being lowered, which creates a very disturbing precedent. When that threshold is lowered, we leave the door open to potential abuses of privacy.

This bill, which is supposed to deal solely with cyberbullying, goes on to include a provision encouraging Internet service providers to hand over personal information to authorities. In return, they cannot be criminally prosecuted.

I am not naive; I know that this is already happening. I know that there are Internet service providers who are sometimes handing over data that could be useful in criminal investigations. It is already happening, but right now Internet service providers are supposed to consider what might happen to them if they hand over that information. It may not be a good idea to provide it. They need to ask themselves those questions; they need to think about it before they hand over personal information, and that is what they do.

By removing the need for this sober thought prior to the sharing of data, the government is essentially opening the door to the sharing of personal information. It is creating and promoting a system that works completely outside any judicial oversight, a system that sidesteps all parliamentary oversight, and a system that excludes nearly every authority that should have the right to look into these activities.

Obviously, Internet service providers are not supposed to be spies. They are supposed to be people who give us access to the Internet, period. However, more and more, Internet service providers are being used to obtain information without judicial or parliamentary oversight. I find this extremely problematic, especially as we know, from a story published in the *Globe and Mail*, that spectrum licences require Internet service providers to build infrastructure specifically designed to store the personal data of the company's users or customers.

When such a provision is added to this infrastructure, we basically have an online spying system free of any oversight. I find this very problematic, and I think most Canadians will find it problematic as

well, especially after hearing about the U.S. scandal and the American people's surprise at learning what was going on with Verizon, the NSA and PRISM. The government is recreating a very similar system in a bill that is supposed to address only cyberbullying.

I have a big problem with this provision, and I hope the government will seriously consider it before sending the bill to the next stage. I would ask all members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to study this provision and fully understand what they are opening the door to. Indeed, this is very serious and creates an ominous precedent.

This bill also criminalizes software that can be used to access telecommunications infrastructure such as Internet services or television. That is good. Canadians must not be encouraged to steal cable programming.

• (1635)

However, not everything is black and white. Many software packages permit access to another computer, but for legitimate reasons. For example, there is software that permits access to another computer to verify its security or to repair it. Other software allows a person to create an internal network with two or three friends. Basically, this provides access to another computer, but not for criminal reasons or to steal from the Internet or from cable. It is for legitimate reasons.

I think that this requires a lot of study to identify the possible negative repercussions of this sort of clause, because as I was saying, it is not black and white. We cannot say that all software allowing access to another computer should be criminalized. We cannot think like that. We have to think of all the possible repercussions of this sort of clause.

There is another point deserving of more in-depth study that might raise some concerns. That is prohibiting certain people from using the Internet. I can understand the logic. However, is it really possible to ban someone from using a computer? Computers and the Internet are everywhere. I think that this may cause problems of compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is really important to establish whether this clause is realistic and what its charter repercussions would be.

I have spoken about the importance of the Internet in our lives. Its possibilities are endless. We can communicate, participate in democracy, buy things online and take part in a whole digital economy. However, when we start opening the door to provisions that allow potential abuses of privacy, we are jeopardizing everything that the Internet is supposed to be.

We are putting at risk people who might want to use the Internet to challenge the government or its choices and policies. We are putting the Internet at risk as a free and open medium. With regard to Internet surveillance and online spying—no matter what we call it—we cannot allow our Internet to be destroyed by these sorts of provisions. It is extremely important that privacy remain paramount in Canada. This is entrenched in section 8 of our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is paramount that this right always be respected.

*Government Orders*

I hope that everyone on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights will assess all of the provisions I spoke about so that they truly understand the repercussions of this bill before moving forward. That said, I want to reiterate that cyberbullying is an extremely important issue, and we should really be dealing with it specifically. That is what the victims deserve.

Everyone here agrees that that part of the bill should be fast-tracked. I think it is really unfortunate that the government has taken a cyberbullying bill and included 50 pages on lawful access, which has nothing to do with protecting our youth.

● (1640)

[*English*]

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for a very thorough investigation of the bill.

She pointed out something particularly troublesome and particularly relevant; that is, once the images go out on the Internet they can be very damaging. Far too many young people do not have a real sense of just how serious it is when they send these pictures and how it can destroy a life, how it can impact a young person's life for many years in very upsetting and dangerous circumstances.

In addition to the key part of the bill, the provision whereby it is not permitted to send out explicit images, might it not have been better for the government to include funding for anti-bullying programming so that we could make that effort to warn young people, to give them some tools with regard to protecting themselves?

Instead, we have all this extraneous and rather troublesome government add-on. It is far better to have a prevention program.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Charmaine Borg:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent question. She has brought up an excellent point. Prevention is an essential component of an anti-bullying strategy for all forms of bullying, online or otherwise.

I have often had a chance to speak with young people about using and posting images on Facebook. I would say that most of them do not think twice before posting an image or a potentially negative comment about someone else.

It is extremely important that the government focus on preventive measures for these types of issues and cyberbullying.

I know that there are organizations, such as MediaSmarts, that are working hard to educate youth about how to use the Internet safely. However, there is still a lot of work to be done and there are very few initiatives right now.

That is why I believe that the government should focus on this issue sooner than later. There are too many lives at stake.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question about the drafting of this bill.

The Conservatives say that they respect Canadians' right to privacy. However, the Information Commissioner saw this bill for the first time the day it was introduced.

What does my colleague think of the decision to not consult the commissioner in advance?

**Ms. Charmaine Borg:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify one small point. I believe that my colleague was talking about the Privacy Commissioner, not the Information Commissioner. I think that it was important for her to be consulted.

When drafting a bill that has the potential to have very negative implications for Canadians' privacy, it seems logical that the Privacy Commissioner would be consulted. That is what she is there for. She does an excellent job of protecting Canadians' privacy. That should have been part of the government's plan.

I would like to point out that Ontario's Privacy Commissioner has raised concerns about this bill. I would like to quote her as this raises an important point in this debate:

We can all agree that cyberbullying is an issue that needs immediate attention but it is very troubling to see the government once again trying to enact new surveillance powers under the guise of protecting children. Regrettably, the federal government is using this pressing social issue as an opportunity to resurrect much of its former surveillance legislation, Bill C-30.

A number of commissioners have raised concerns about Bill C-30. If my memory serves me well, the government even said that it would consult the commissioner when dealing with this issue. It did not.

In my opinion, this really shows that privacy is clearly not a priority for this government.

● (1645)

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville, who does an excellent job handling digital issues. She is very good at what she does. I think that her speech today gave us a lot of information about what cyberbullying is and about potential solutions.

We have heard about consultation. We have pointed out that this bill does more than address simply cyberbullying. There are 40 other pages on other subjects.

I have an observation and not really a question. We have come to expect omnibus bills that address several issues from the Conservative government, instead of individual, clear, concise bills on important issues like cyberbullying.

This week, our colleague brought forward a motion calling for the unanimous consent of the House to split this bill in two. There would be a cyberbullying bill and then a bill for everything else, which closely resembles a bill previously introduced by the Conservatives.

What does my colleague think about the fact that our colleagues opposite refused to grant unanimous consent? Does that not show a lack of respect for the families affected by cyberbullying and for those who have unfortunately lost family members as a result of cyberbullying?

**Ms. Charmaine Borg:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, who is from a neighbouring constituency, for the question. She also knows her portfolio really well.

To answer her question, yes, this shows a lack of respect. We all said we wanted to address cyberbullying and everyone in the House agreed to do so. This issue is too important, especially today, after tragedies involving people like Rehtaeh Parsons, Amanda Todd and many other young people who have been the victims of this kind of bullying.

This bill contains only three or four pages on cyberbullying. It does not even make up the larger part of the bill on cyberbullying. This is basically a bill on lawful access. If we compare the number of pages on cyberbullying to the number of pages on lawful access, it is pretty clear that this is a bill on lawful access.

We should be debating just cyberbullying. It is too important, and the victims deserve more.

[English]

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I noted that in her remarks the member alluded to the idea that she somehow felt the Privacy Commissioner had not been consulted appropriately.

I want to make it clear and have it on the record that in bringing forward a bill, the government cannot share the text of a bill prior to it being introduced in the House. However, the Privacy Commissioner was, in fact, consulted in the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Report on Cyberbullying, so there was definitely some consultation that took place with the Privacy Commissioner in terms of trying to ensure that those issues were addressed.

In fact, in *The Globe and Mail* today, the Privacy Commissioner said:

I think it stands to reason that in order to literally police the Internet, you do need these powers. And if you want to be effective against cyberbullying, I would understand you do need extraordinary powers, so it doesn't seem to me inappropriate.

I would like to have the hon. member offer her comments on the fact that the Privacy Commissioner has made this statement, and obviously was consulted. Maybe she would want to take back some of the comments she made and address this quote from the Privacy Commissioner.

[Translation]

**Ms. Charmaine Borg:** Mr. Speaker, the quotation cited by the member opposite does not really have anything to do with his question, since he said the commissioner was consulted.

Indeed, she made that comment in the *Globe and Mail* before she had time to read the bill. She had not yet read the bill.

As for my colleague's argument that the government cannot share the text of a bill, everyone in the House has the opportunity to draft a bill. I drafted a bill and I myself consulted the commissioner with the text of my bill in hand. That is definitely possible.

• (1650)

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, Natural Resources.

### Government Orders

Resuming debate, the hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-13, an Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act, the Competition Act and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act. I thank the Minister of Justice for introducing this long-awaited bill, which was tabled just last week.

I followed yesterday's debate in the House closely, as there are many aspects of the bill to study. The bill primarily seeks to address the issue of cyberbullying.

As we all know, cyberbullying is having devastating effects, particularly on young people. It is something we all agree must be addressed and eliminated. The tragic stories of Amanda Todd, Rehtaeh Parsons, Todd Loik and others have spurred a national discussion on how society must do a better job of working together to address bullying, harassment and other heinous acts. These acts can take place in public places like schools or the workplace, but they can also take place online through social media sites, apps, et cetera.

Regardless of where bullying and harassment takes place, proper tools are needed to address these very serious acts. Eliminating cyberbullying is a complex task, requiring a multi-faceted approach. It means giving police the tools they need to properly investigate cases and bring forward charges as needed. It means having resources and education tools available and accessible to youth, as well as their parents.

Yesterday I participated in a Twitter town hall meeting in Coquitlam to talk about crime. We talked about cyberbullying and the need for a holistic approach. It is clear to me we need a collaborative and well thought out strategy to address how bullying happens, how it affects people, how we can deal with it and how we can try to eliminate it.

Parliament has debated this before. Last year, the NDP put forward a proposal to strike an all-party committee to study and craft a national anti-bullying strategy. Unfortunately, the government voted down the motion. However, I believe the motion generated a lot of debate, which is healthy and crucial for a democracy. I have no doubt that part of the solution of cyberbullying lies in modernizing the Criminal Code to ensure it reflects the realities of crimes and how they are committed today.

The same was required for child luring laws. I proposed two private member's bills to close loopholes in the Criminal Code. The bills would have ensured prosecution of child predators was not hindered by whether a child was lured online instead of in person, or if the luring was inside or outside of Canada's borders. My work on the bills has shown me that as legislators we must look at how the Criminal Code is working in today's digital era and make improvements as needed.

*Government Orders*

Earlier this year, I seconded legislation put forward by my colleague, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, which, like the legislation before us today, would criminalize the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. Bill C-540 was introduced in Parliament earlier this year. It is quite a simple, straightforward, one-page bill. With consent from the government, the bill could have moved forward before the House rose in June. When I first looked at Bill C-13, the government's legislation before us today, I was pleased to see that the contents of Bill C-540 were included in the bill.

However, there is much more in Bill C-13 that must be looked at. It contains dozens of clauses, of which only a handful directly relate to cyberbullying. Many clauses were adopted from the failed Bill C-30, known as the protecting children from Internet predators act. Bill C-30 was also widely associated with comments made by the former Conservative public safety minister, who had the gall to accuse opposition members of supporting child pornographers when they raised questions about the bill's scope. The bill was not just rejected by the opposition, it was widely rejected by privacy advocates and the public, forcing the Conservatives to back away from the bill earlier this year. I cannot recall another time when the government received such scathing criticism of a bill that it realized the error of its ways and was forced to abandon the bill.

● (1655)

Needless to say, when I learned that a number of clauses from failed Bill C-30 would be included in the cyberbullying bill before us today, I was very concerned. While Bill C-13 targets cyberbullying, it also goes after other issues, such as banks' financial data, the terrorist financing act, telemarketing, and the theft of telecommunication services.

The minister has assured us that prior judicial authorization is required in every single clause of the bill and that there is no ability for police to act without warrants here. However, lawful access provisions require close scrutiny. This is a complex, lengthy bill that requires careful study at committee.

As I mentioned before, only a few pages of this 70-page omnibus-style bill are directly related to cyberbullying. Yesterday the NDP proposed what I think is a very smart legislative solution. Our justice critic proposed splitting this bill in two. The cyberbullying provisions would be removed from Bill C-13 and put into a separate bill that could be expedited through the legislative process. In this way, the justice committee could take the appropriate amount of time to study other provisions contained in Bill C-13. I am disappointed that the Conservatives rejected this very logical proposal.

I intend to support Bill C-13 at second reading. I believe it deserves to be carefully studied at committee.

As I have outlined in my remarks today, cyberbullying is a very distressing problem. By making it illegal to distribute intimate images of people without their consent, we give police and the courts another tool to go after those who attack and victimize others online.

The other provisions in this bill require careful scrutiny. I am hopeful that members of the justice committee will be given adequate time to study this bill thoroughly.

In closing, I would like to say a few words on a more personal note. I want to acknowledge the courage and perseverance of the

parents of Amanda Todd, Rehtaeh Parsons, and others. In the wake of the tragedy of losing a child, they have spoken out publicly and have asked hard questions of us as a society. They are driving a national debate on how we must do a better job protecting young people from online crime. I believe that their work will spare other young people and their families from enduring pain, suffering, and tragedy resulting from such terrible unchecked acts as cyberbullying.

In my riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam and in Port Moody, the story of Amanda Todd has resonated with parents, children, educators, policy-makers, city officials, the police, and so many others. In fact, it has resonated not only across the country but around the world. Although Amanda will never know the legacy she left, her heartbreaking final words will forever haunt us and remind us that we must do a better job.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member. He made reference to breaking up the bill. I think it is important to note that yesterday, when the minister introduced the bill, we were afforded the opportunity to ask a question. The minister tried to express goodwill in dealing with this issue. The critic from the Liberal Party, the member for Charlottetown, asked if they could divide the bill and take out the part of the legislation that all members of this chamber, all political parties, all entities, and all stakeholders who go beyond the bubble here in Ottawa want to see.

We all want to see legislation to deal with cyberbullying. That is very clear and has been clear for a long time. The Liberal member from Vancouver has had private member's legislation on cyberbullying. I understand that the New Democrats have a private member's bill on cyberbullying. Obviously, the government is concerned about it.

Does the member not believe that it is achievable? All it would take would be the minister responsible for the legislation giving a clear indication that he would take out the cyberbullying part and incorporate it as a stand-alone piece of legislation. We could actually have it passed before Christmas. Does the member agree with that, in principle?

● (1700)

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with that. I mentioned in my remarks that splitting the bill would make sense. I think there would be agreement among parliamentarians to fast-track this as quickly as possible. However, it would, as the member has mentioned, require the government to make the decision, which we proposed, to split the bill and focus specifically on cyberbullying.

It is unfortunate that when the New Democrats proposed that option, the government did not listen and voted that down. That is very unfortunate. It could have been a way forward. We would have had agreement.

*Government Orders*

The rest of the legislation is substantive. There are quite a few acts, and there are quite a few pages of study that justice will have to look at to deal with that portion, which I think would make sense as Bill C-13. A new bill, focused on just cyberbullying, would make a lot of sense.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on an excellent speech. Like him, I agree that the bill really should have stuck to the issue of cyberbullying instead of becoming a kitchen sink that we are throwing all kinds of other issues into.

Of huge concern to me is the issue I thought was dead under Bill C-30. The justice minister at the time promised Canadians that Bill C-30 and the Internet snooping provisions that were critical to that bill would be dead and gone, once and for all.

I have risen in question period quite a bit lately challenging the government, and I do not know how I can say this within the rules of this House, on its veracity, its “truthiness”, perhaps. Now those same issues come into play with respect to the government's commitment that Bill C-30 was dead, because we see those same provisions resurfacing in the context of Bill C-13, which should be a bill that deals only with cyberbullying and deals only with the distribution of intimate images. Instead, much like with the wireless option, we see Internet snooping provisions snuck in.

I wonder whether the member would agree that those provisions have no place in the bill and that we need to pull the bill apart and deal—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam, with a short answer, please.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree that the bill should be separated. It makes no sense that we have created this omnibus bill.

I mentioned the Canada Evidence Act, the Competition Act, and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act. These are huge pieces of legislation that should be separated and not put in with the cyberbullying bill. That is the critical element here.

That is what I believe this House is responding to that was so critical in affecting people like Amanda Todd, Rehtaeh Parsons, and other victims. I think we would find agreement that we need to move forward and tackle that legislation, get it through the House, and get it implemented so that we can start saving lives and making a difference to kids and their families right across this country.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to start my remarks on Bill C-13 by congratulating my many colleagues who work tirelessly for justice, the protection of all Canadians and respect for their rights and for individuals. It is truly high time for us to better protect ourselves from the non-consensual distribution of intimate images.

We are all shocked and saddened, and were truly heart-broken at the highly publicized suicides of teenagers who were victims of cyberbullying, including Rehtaeh Parsons, in Nova Scotia, Amanda Todd, in British Columbia, and so many others. We must prevent

such tragedies from happening again, because these young girls are not the only ones to have been bullied.

Youth between 12 and 14 are most likely to be victims of cyberbullying, which can seriously affect their mental health and well-being.

According to recent studies, cyberbullying has an adverse effect on the social and emotional aspects of a young person's life and on their ability to learn. These young people suffer from anxiety, shorter attention spans, lower marks at school, feelings of despair and isolation, depression and even suicidal tendencies, as in these well-known cases, unfortunately.

I want to acknowledge that my colleague, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, brought attention to the issue of bullying in the House with his motion to create a national bullying prevention strategy. I want to thank him for taking that initiative. His hard work to fight any form of bullying is truly admirable.

Earlier this year, the NDP member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour introduced a bill to make the non-consensual distribution of sexually explicit images an offence.

Unfortunately, instead of setting partisanship aside and expediting passage of these measures, the Conservatives refused to act on the motion and bill brought forward by my colleagues and waited until it suited them to introduce Bill C-13, a bill that contains a number of provisions that have nothing to do with cyberbullying and provides nothing meaningful for its prevention.

I would like to thank the NDP justice critic, my colleague from Gatineau, for the hard work she has done on this issue. She moved that Bill C-13 be divided in order to remove the parts of the bill that do not pertain to cyberbullying and address them in another debate. She moved for the bill to be split so that the provisions related to the non-consensual distribution of intimate images could be passed quickly since everyone in the House agrees on them. This would have allowed the other provisions, which were previously set out in the now-defunct Bill C-30, to be carefully examined separately in committee.

This would have allowed us to deal with the provisions of the bill that are not related to this very sensitive issue separately. That is what we must do in order to have a healthy debate on this subject, since the Conservatives are trying to include provisions on telemarketing and other things in a bill on cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a very important issue, and we need to deal with it.

For example, I would like to share with the House what Ann Cavoukian, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, had to say on this subject. She said:

We can all agree that cyberbullying is an issue that needs immediate attention but it is very troubling to see the government once again trying to enact new surveillance powers under the guise of protecting children. Regrettably, the federal government is using this pressing social issue as an opportunity to resurrect much of its former surveillance legislation, Bill C-30.

It is important to remember the work of my colleague, the hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville, who fought hard against Bill C-30, which was a direct attack on the freedoms of Canadians and their right to privacy.

*Government Orders*

I am certain that she will ensure that the Conservatives are held accountable when the committee examines this bill, which unfortunately contains provisions that have nothing to do with cyberbullying and are of concern to many people in the digital community.

● (1705)

Bill C-13 covers much more ground than Bill C-540, which was introduced by my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. Along the way, it addresses many other issues, such as the financial data of banks, the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act, telemarketing and the theft of a communication service. It also includes some of the provisions of Bill C-30.

The New Democrats, privacy advocates and the public rejected Bill C-30, forcing the Conservatives to abandon it earlier this year and to promise that the Criminal Code would be modernized and would not include the measures contained in Bill C-30.

Now, privacy advocates are criticizing the provisions in Bill C-13 on lawful access to personal information and stressing the need to implement measures to protect Canadians' right to privacy against abuse. They say that certain specific provisions must be examined more closely, especially clause 20, which deals with the new procedures for obtaining a warrant.

The NDP proposes that the two very different parts of the bill be separated. It is clear that the Conservative government is just playing politics to pass its controversial provisions, under the guise of doing something for our youth. At the very least, we should carefully study this bill in committee, to ensure that it will provide police with the tools they need to protect our youth and to answer important questions about the other provisions included in the bill.

I will take this opportunity to talk about what the youth centre workers in my riding know well. They know this issue very well because they too often come face to face with problems that many people would rather not see. These workers are role models and friends to the young people who so desperately need them. They are on the front lines in their work with young people. I think we have to take their views into consideration. Here is what one worker at the youth centre in Saint-Canut, in my riding, had to say about cyberbullying.

She told me that a number of young people were victims and that very few resources were available to fight against cyberbullying. She finds it hard to control this type of bullying because everything happens so fast on social networks, bullies can remain anonymous and it is everywhere.

At her youth centre there is zero tolerance. If the computers at the youth centre are used inappropriately, there are consequences. She said that it was important for them to make their teenagers aware of the repercussions that this could have and to educate them in order to prevent cyberbullying. This is about confidentiality on the Internet and being careful about the comments and photos we post.

They encourage young people to file a complaint if there are abuses, but often, unfortunately, the police do not have the resources or the time to deal with this type of problem. According to her, it would be better if the complaints were taken seriously and processed as quickly as possible. Young people who commit this type of

bullying have to know that there will be consequences for their actions even from behind their computer screen. She thinks it would be important to give police officers what they need to be quick and effective. The sense of anonymity and of not being able to get caught makes young people believe that they can do whatever they want on the Internet. That is what she told me.

Prevention, raising awareness among young people and giving police forces and youth case workers the necessary resources are key to fighting cyberbullying, in addition to the provisions contained in the first part of Bill C-13, the part that truly deals with cyberbullying.

This would help reinforce the legal framework. Nonetheless, it is a national strategy, like the one proposed by my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, which might have an impact on the other aspects.

I gather from this debate and the information from young people and stakeholders in my riding that some of the pages of this bill will help in the fight against cyberbullying. However, prevention and awareness raising are even more pressing.

● (1710)

This bill incorporates a patchwork of measures on telemarketing, theft of telecommunication services, and terrorist activities. These are direct descendants of measures in Bill C-30, the infamous bill the Conservatives had to go back on.

In closing, it is important to move forward in the fight against cyberbullying. As my two colleagues who spoke before me said, the NDP will be very active and very vigilant on this file.

● (1715)

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my NDP colleague for her speech.

[*English*]

The question I want to ask has to do with the evidentiary requirement for a warrant. One of the things that this bill would do is change the threshold for obtaining a warrant for matters contained in the bill, from having reasonable and probable grounds to believe, to having a reasonable suspicion.

If someone files an access to information request for information within a minister's office, the standard that has to be met is for there to be reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the information is contained within the minister's office. Given the higher standard that is required to obtain information from ministers' offices compared to the standard that would be lowered for the electronic records of everyday Canadians, does the member see the incongruity there, with respect to the rights of private information of Canadians, which would now be easier to get than the records that are contained in a minister's office under an ATIP application?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Mylène Freeman:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. He mentioned an interesting contradiction.



*Government Orders*

I agree that it does not make sense. I really want to clearly emphasize the fact that the NDP will remain vigilant regarding the inclusion of clauses that might be too similar to those in Bill C-30, which contained measures that went way too far in terms of Canadians' privacy. That is a priority for us. That is a top priority for my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville, whose constituency is next to mine. I know she has been working very hard on this file. It makes no sense to ask so much of Canadians. The member really illustrated the government's double standard, depending on whether the issue pertains to the government or to Canadians.

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to ask my colleague a question, since she is chair of our women's caucus.

Since members, like me, who are younger than what we normally see in this House were elected, people have often wondered if age could lead to prejudice about behaviour. I often explain that it is not a question of age, but rather a question of gender, unfortunately.

When we look at the cases of cyberbullying that have appeared in the news in recent years, particularly those my colleague and some other members have mentioned, it seems to me that girls and young women are unfortunately more often the victims.

Given that my colleague cares so much about this issue, I wonder if she could comment on this aspect and the importance of defending gender equality in the fight against cyberbullying.

**Ms. Mylène Freeman:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Chambly—Borduas for his excellent question.

He knows that, among ourselves, we often compare how we are treated. Experience tells us that people have no trouble accepting young people in politics, but they have some trouble accepting young women in politics.

Indeed, as a young woman who grew up in the digital age, I see something of myself in the stories we watch on television about Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd. I know girls who have gone through similar situations. My colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville said she was bullied when she was younger. I too have been bullied.

This is a crucial issue that we do not talk about enough. Young women seem to be targeted much more often than young men. That said, we must also talk about all forms of bullying.

I find it really unfortunate that the government did not seize the opportunity to focus on prevention and talk about this issue seriously. Instead, it tried to implement measures that were so unpopular they had to be withdrawn. It is truly unfortunate that we cannot address this issue because we are faced with the re-emergence of Bill C-30.

• (1720)

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** We are going to resume debate. I will let the hon. member for Davenport know we do not have quite the 20 minutes that he might have expected for his remarks, but it looks as if we have nine minutes or so. Of course he will have the remaining time available when the House next resumes debate on the question.

The hon. member for Davenport.

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as usual it is a deep honour to rise in the House on behalf of the constituents in my riding of Davenport in the great city of Toronto on a piece of legislation that strikes to the heart of families right across the country.

As many of my colleagues have already said here today, witnessing the profound courage and commitment of both the Parsons and Todd families through this incredibly difficult chapter in their lives has been something that I think all Canadians have noticed and learned from.

I think when Canadians are faced with something of this magnitude that touches all of us in the way that this does, they rightly expect that we here park some of our partisan instincts and deal with the situation at hand.

One of the ways a majority Parliament can sometimes work is when members on the opposite side and the opposition present bills that really do connect with an important issue right across the country and that pretty much everyone here in this place agrees with. Sure enough, from time to time, the government adopts those ideas. I think it is fair to say that while we work toward being on that side of the aisle and having that party on this side of the aisle, in the meantime, we find ways once in a while to advance issues that we can all agree on, and I think this was one of those issues.

My colleague for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour tabled a piece of legislation in which we sought all-party unanimous consent, but we did not get it. That is one thing, but to have the government come back with a very similar bill is something altogether different. We can support that, but as usual with the Conservative government, it cannot resist its inclination to play politics with every issue. Every issue for the current government becomes a wedge issue and an opportunity to fundraise and hector the opposition.

We saw this with Bill C-30, the widely discredited online spying bill that the government presented. The minister in charge of it at the time badgered the opposition, and in fact, all Canadians who happened to disagree with his perspective and the wide breadth of the bill by saying that if one did not support Bill C-30, one stood with the child pornographers, which was an absolutely outrageous comment and effectively killed the bill.

The government also eventually declared that Bill C-30 was not going to come back. There were too many questions, not the least of which were the outrageous comments from the lead minister. There were also too many questions around privacy and civil liberties. We need to be clear that the foundation of a liberal democracy is the protection of civil liberties.

We see that in the bill we could have just dealt with the cyberbullying. I am sure members opposite on the government side would probably prefer to do that too. Canadians watching this would also be wondering why we do not just do that. The issues of cyberbullying are complex and critical, and they are happening right now as I speak.

*Private Members' Business*

● (1725)

This issue is far too important, too pressing, and too complex, quite frankly, to dump it into a boilerplate piece of legislation that contains all sorts of other issues. Maybe the government can explain to Canadians the link between cyberbullying and the inclusion in this law of a two-year sentence for the theft of cable television. That is in the bill.

We are trying to get to the nub of an issue that is affecting many of our young people and many of our families, and for some families it is affecting them in the most tragic of ways.

I am trying to contain my sense of outrage that we even have to discuss pulling this part of the bill out and having it as a stand-alone piece and voting on it immediately. However, the government did have that opportunity when my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour presented his cyberbullying bill in the first place.

When faced with such pressing issues around protecting our young people, it is tempting to consider lowering the bar in our pursuit of protecting people's privacy and protecting civil liberties. It is tempting to do that. I think that one of the reasons the government has thrown in all these other things that it would like to do is that, again, it is trying to play politics with this issue.

However, it is not just the opposition that has serious concerns about some of the other issues that are in the bill. The Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner, Madam Cavoukian, also has serious concerns about this, as she did with Bill C-30. It is the same with Canada's Privacy Commissioner, who had raised serious concerns about Bill C-30 and is going to carefully look at this bill as well.

I would sum up by saying that sometimes it is better for all of us that we park the partisanship in this place and deal with a pressing issue that affects Canadians and some of our more vulnerable young people from coast to coast to coast. By separating this part out of Bill C-13, we would be doing that. We would also be signalling to Canadians that we do take this seriously and that we want to act quickly to protect the young people of this country.

● (1730)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The hon. member for Davenport will have eleven and a half minutes remaining in the time provided for his remarks when the House next returns to debate on the motion.

It being 5:30 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]

### PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should endorse the report of the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities entitled "Rethinking disAbility in the Private Sector", and its findings, and commit to furthering public-private cooperation by: (a) building on existing government

initiatives, such as the Opportunities Fund, the Registered Disability Savings Plan, the ratification of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities; (b) issuing a call to action for Canadian employers to examine the expert panel's findings and encouraging employers to take advantage of private sector-led initiatives to increase employment levels for persons with disabilities in Canada; (c) pursuing greater accountability and coordination of its labour market funding for persons with disabilities and ensuring that funding is demand driven and focussed on suitable performance indicators with strong demonstrable results; (d) establishing an increased focus on young people with disabilities to include support mechanisms specifically targeted at increasing employment levels among youth with disabilities, through programs such as the Youth Employment Strategy; and (e) strengthening efforts to identify existing innovative approaches to increasing the employment of persons with disabilities occurring in communities across Canada and ensuring that programs have the flexibility to help replicate such approaches.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and a thrill once again to rise and speak to my motion and again turn the attention of members of the House to a tremendously important issue: creating important economic opportunities for people living with disabilities and supporting their social and economic integration into our communities.

Private member's Motion No. 430 calls upon the House to endorse the recent report from the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, entitled "Rethinking DisAbility in the Private Sector", and its findings, and to commit to further building public-private co-operation on this issue by taking a number of additional concrete steps.

I can think of no better way to begin than to quote the first three sentences of the report that was tabled. I will mention the panel members by name because of the excellent work that they have done. They are Kenneth Fredeen, who was the chair; Mark Wafer; Dr. Gary Birch; and Kathy Martin. All of these members are key individuals in advancing persons with disabilities and advocating for them to find gainful employment.

I will quote from the report:

We all have abilities, but some are more apparent than others.

From what we have seen in companies that hire people with disabilities—and from our own experiences as friends or family members of someone with a disability—we know that they can contribute greatly to business and to society. Yet despite an aging population and a looming labour skills shortage, this significant talent pool is being overlooked.

That is the thrust of my motion. My motion calls not only on governments to endorse the labour market panel's recent report but also on the private sector to hear, examine, and act on the findings. It makes good business sense.

It also calls on the government to promote further public-private co-operation, because we know that leadership from the private sector is crucial if we are going to see real progress.

Motion No. 430 also calls for a specific focus on young people with disabilities in programs such as the youth employment strategy, which we currently fund, and new approaches to ensure that government programs are flexible and adaptable to innovative community-level strategies. It calls for improvements to our labour market agreements for people with disabilities to ensure that funding is relevant and effective.

These measures would help make sure that Canada is supporting those individuals who are on the front lines, supporting Canadians with disabilities, and capitalizing on innovative community-level approaches.

I will give the House an example. In my home community of Brantford, there is an organization called Crossing All Bridges. Crossing All Bridges is currently going through the process of developing skills and offerings to individuals in the private sector for those individuals and their clients to build social enterprises in the form of co-operatives that provide services. Social enterprises are not a new movement, but it is new terminology.

One such service that the organization is considering is a shredding service. This is a task that many individuals with disabilities not only enjoy doing but get a sense of fulfillment from, since they are working. Those services can then be offered, generate income, and sustain the needs of the people with disabilities.

There is momentum building on this behind the scenes and right across Canada. We know that more and more Canadians are beginning to speak up about this issue. There is a growing effort among businesses and disability organizations across Canada to break down the stigmas that have persisted for too long about hiring people living with disabilities. We are seeing the issue being elevated on the national stage through a renewed focus by our Conservative government.

● (1735)

The human resources committee has just completed a comprehensive report on employment opportunities for people with disabilities. We heard from many people and communities right across Canada. Organizations and individuals came to our committee and suggested that there are so many people who are ready, willing, and able to work yet are having a hard time breaking down the stigma and the barriers to employment.

We want to focus, as the report does, on those entrepreneurs and private companies that are great role models in the country. They have focused on hiring persons with disabilities, because it benefits their businesses.

In our government's 2013 budget, we placed a specific focus on helping to support people with disabilities who want to work, including with new funding for the Canadian employers disability forum. The employers forum is an extension of the panel's work. It will seek out and pull together the best practices of employers on a national level for the purpose of sharing and disseminating them right across the country to educate private business owners about the benefits and the business case for hiring someone with a disability.

In my community, we have a car dealership that has an employee who is one of the most wonderful people one could ever meet. Everyone in the business and the community is aware of Norman at this particular car dealership. Norman comes to work every day. He gives a 200% effort every day. Everyone sees Norman's commitment to the business. It inspires the culture of the business. It inspires the customer base. It inspires the whole community.

Another company in my riding is SC Johnson. When people come to the reception desk, they meet a young man who is blind. He greets everyone with a large smile on his face and introduces them to the

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whole perspective of the company, right there at the reception desk. If they are going anywhere in that large plant that employs over 400 people, he will take them to every corner, even though he lives with blindness.

It does not matter what the disability is. It could be a physical, mobility, intellectual, or episodic disability. These are all disabilities we need to address through heightening awareness across this country. My motion aims to capture and build on that momentum.

We know that Canada is projected to face very challenging labour shortfalls in the years ahead due to the aging population. This means that supporting Canadians who are currently under-represented in the labour force is more important than ever. We need to better connect them with the jobs that are available. Statistics tell us, and this information is quite startling, that today there are 800,000 Canadians with disabilities who are ready, willing, and able to go to work. Of those, 350,000 have a post-secondary education.

There are many barriers in the workplace today and stigma attached to having a disability, whether it is the way one walks or does not walk, the way one talks, or the fact that one is deaf. There are opportunities for all of these people, and their skill sets are solid.

As I have said before, I am thankful for the great work of groups like the recent Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and a host of other organizations. We now know that Canadians living with disabilities represent one of the most significant untapped pools of talented people in Canada who want to contribute more. In putting this motion together, we spent over a year talking with organizations from across the country that represent people with disabilities. There are specific groups. There are people representing the intellectually disabled. There are people representing all nature of disabilities.

● (1740)

We came together with them to listen to what their needs were. Inevitably, they ended up telling us these people just needed the door opened a bit and once it was open a bit for them in a private company, they would show their talent and shine in those roles. That is what we are witnessing. Not only do they want to work, but they make exceptional employees.

The panel's report carries an important message for employers: that hiring employees with a disability is not just the right thing to do, it makes good business sense.

Some other examples are pointed out in the report. Some are U.S. examples. A major 2005 U.S. survey of customer perceptions toward companies hiring people with disabilities found that 92% of Americans viewed these companies more favourably and 87% said that they would give their business to companies that hired people with disabilities.

A DuPont study showed that 90% of people with disabilities did their jobs as well as or better than non-disabled co-workers. It found that turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness dropped appreciably in organizations with disabled workers.

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A widely accepted study conducted by the U.S. Job Accommodation Network found that providing workplace accommodation typically came at low cost, with 50% of participants reporting spending nothing at all. Imagine one of the barriers is a person who needs some accommodation in the workplace and the employer looks at that and says that it is one of the things it will have to do. Perhaps it is a physical accommodation in the workplace. Fifty per cent of the time there is no accommodation needed for persons with disabilities and when there is accommodation needed, statistics show us the cost is usually less than \$500 to a business.

Businesses reported major benefits for reduced turnover when employing people with disabilities. For instance, the Marriott hotel chain has reported a 6% turnover rate among employees with disabilities versus 52% in its overall turnover rate. Canadian Rich Donovan, founder of the Fifth Quadrant Analytics, found that companies that performed well in disability were highly responsive to their customers and thus outperformed peers in revenue growth. This is the business case that is being made.

I am very proud to say our government has moved forward on a number of initiatives, ahead of the curve in terms of the momentum that has been gained. Under our labour market agreements for persons with disabilities, we transfer over \$218 million to provinces to support programs.

My motion also seeks to take advantage of some of the new and innovative ways to integrate persons with disabilities through new negotiated labour market agreements with the provinces. They include the youth employment strategy, with \$300 million annually for young Canadians, including those with disabilities. The opportunities fund provides \$30 million annually to help persons with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and keep employment, and for self-employment.

In my community, there is a business that has been set up by Lisa Hooper. She, along with four others who work in her organization, consults with employers from across the community and consults with persons who desire to work. She matches them together. This is a trend that is happening more often, and it helps employers. Again, this is another avenue. We help support programs that Lisa delivers within my community.

This is an issue that is at the forefront.

I will conclude with one quote from an organization called People First Canada. It states:

There are so many benefits that come from being employed in the regular workforce. There are social, personal and community benefits that often mean more to a person than their paycheck does. People First of Canada believes...Motion...M-416 is an important step towards increasing employment across the country for Canadians with disabilities.

It is a privilege to put this issue on the floor of the House of Commons.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I do not doubt that there are good intentions behind this motion. However, I doubt that the member can name the key issues for employability of people with disabilities.

I will explain. During debate on the motion, I would have liked us to have an in-depth discussion on flexible scheduling, job stability and, perhaps, the notion of high-quality jobs. Jobs offered to people with disabilities are often not that interesting.

Besides the measures he mentioned earlier, what would my colleague say is the most important issue that should be tackled first? What makes it difficult for a person with disabilities to go to work?

[*English*]

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Mr. Speaker, the biggest issues facing persons with disabilities who are ready, willing, and able to go into the workforce are the stigma and the barriers that are currently in our society, which prejudice this group from being able to be employed.

To address another part of the question, I can think of some high-skill jobs that have been created by some employers across the country. One such employer is in Kitchener. It is Dolphin Digital Technologies.

Dolphin makes software for the investment community. It is highly successful. All but one of its employees has a disability. These are highly skilled people who come to work. One individual who is paralyzed uses a mouth-pen to touch the screen to do the work. All they need is some accommodation. This is a highly successful company.

It does cover the broad range of occupations. Many people with disabilities have high skill sets that are required in today's workforce.

• (1750)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the motion put forward by my colleague from Brant.

I share the opinion he expressed in his reply to the last question about the stigma that surrounds and limits opportunities for persons with disabilities. Through the course of our last study, we saw companies like Tim Hortons step up and say that they have not done enough. It is a pool of labour that they have not tapped, and they promise to do a better job with it. That was sort of encouraging.

I want to ask my colleague a question. There are some good things that take place in each of the provinces. A current undertaking by the government is the Canada job grant, and a portion of the LMAs, from which the provinces draw their funding to support these programs, is now profiled so that it has to be used for the Canada job grant.

We are hearing from groups that are concerned about losing some of those opportunities, some of the infrastructure, some of the capacity that they have been building over the last number of years, because this money has been in the system since 2008.

Is the member hearing from those groups about those same concerns?

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and for his ongoing support of not only my motion but the issues surrounding it.

There are a multitude of issues surrounding persons with disabilities, which we well know. I am so glad he asked this question. Actually, what we have been hearing from organizations for well over a year, as I mentioned in my speech, is an actual item within my motion. There are five prescriptive items that we are asking the government to undertake. The one thing they said they wanted us to do was to renegotiate the labour market agreements with the provinces they lived in. This was from right across the country.

Sometimes there are better ways to do things, and I believe that is what organizations were saying to us. In fact, I know that is what they were saying to us. There are better ways to deliver to this community of disabled people in our provinces. We want to see change in the labour market agreements as they exist today, and that is why it is in my motion.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, just now, when I asked my colleague what is the greatest challenge, I would have liked to hear him talk about transportation. It is true that prejudice is still widespread. However, transportation for people with disabilities is a major issue just about everywhere in Canada. That is the reality and we cannot ignore it.

I am pleased to speak to Motion No. 430 today concerning job opportunities for people with disabilities. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the commitment of my colleague who, with this motion, has drawn the attention of the House to this crucial issue. I appreciate the work he has done and his commitment to helping people living with functional limitations.

I can say from the outset that we will support this motion.

That said, I have some doubts and some questions about the motion. I cannot help but be somewhat skeptical, given the government's record on this issue in the two years that I have been in office.

After all, since the Conservatives have been in power, they have not really done anything to address the issue of unemployment and disproportionate underemployment for Canadians living with functional limitations.

I will admit that this motion is a step in the right direction. However, I do not think it is enough after all these years in office.

Let us begin by taking a look at the wording of the motion. The motion asks the government to “endorse the report of the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities entitled ‘Rethinking disAbility in the Private Sector’”, and to support other measures to promote employment opportunities for Canadians with disabilities based on the panel's findings.

Let us first talk about the panel's main findings, which are often referred to in the motion. Among other things, we are told that nearly 800,000 persons with disabilities are able to work and that about half of them have a post-secondary education. The report also indicates that when businesses hire persons with disabilities, special arrangements are not needed half of the time. When special arrangements are required, the average cost to the business is only \$500.

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The report also says that there is a strong will to hire persons with disabilities, but that more education and training are necessary for businesses to understand how to overcome obstacles and implement their ideas. The example must come from the top and actions by business leaders are absolutely necessary. Mental disabilities are particularly problematic because employees are reluctant to disclose such difficulties to obtain special arrangements from employers.

The report also found that hiring persons with disabilities makes good business sense and that myths and preconceived ideas still exist in the business community regarding the costs and risks related to the hiring of persons with disabilities.

Come on. Was the government really so ill-informed? The answer is surely no. These are likely open secrets.

Although many studies have been conducted on this issue, most of the recommendations have never been implemented. The existing barriers to employment for persons with disabilities are fairly well known and have been for a number of years. Everyone agrees that the panel's report contains good suggestions for employers and encourages them to hire people with disabilities. However, is that enough after all these years?

For the reasons I just mentioned, I think this report simply ignores the important role that the federal government plays in the fight against inequality in the workforce. This report is sorely lacking because it does not examine job stability, flexible scheduling, the notion of high-quality jobs, health and disability benefits, transportation, housing and income security.

These are all issues that we talked about with witnesses during the study in committee. However, there is no trace of these considerations in a report based on all these consultations.

I wonder why the panel's report is addressed only to Canadian business leaders. Why was the panel not mandated to make recommendations to the government?

If we make the effort to study an issue, it is because we want to come up with recommendations. We could easily ask ourselves why the Conservatives are relying on the private sector and the provinces and territories to fix the problem.

• (1755)

Are they trying in a roundabout way to undermine the federal government's role as the catalyst for change in this file?

For years, organizations that represent Canadians with disabilities have been calling on the government to adopt a comprehensive strategy to improve the representation of people with disabilities in the workforce. This motion and the report's findings to which it refers do not constitute such a strategy. The motion also refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UNCRPD. Need I remind members of the Conservatives' poor record in that regard and that we are still waiting for the follow-up report to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is over a year late?

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Not to mention the fact that the government has also not appointed an internal oversight body to monitor implementation, which could simply have been the Canadian Human Rights Commission. What is more, the government did not sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. When he appeared before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on February 28, Laurie Beachell, from the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, even said that the government had not yet issued its first report to the United Nations. He added that, having signed the convention, Canada is obligated to provide that report. He added that the council was still waiting for the report and that he was disappointed about not having two things: first, the council does not have a strategy for how it is going to move forward and use this document; second, while new policy initiatives are going forward, the council believes that, in some cases, they are not being measured against the convention.

With respect to the existing policies and programs the motion refers to, they contain many gaps and inadequacies, lack coordination with provincial programs and services, and do not include proper performance measures or measurable objectives. A comprehensive assessment of those policies and programs must be done before we go any further on this. The motion and the panel report both fail to take into account people who have complex needs or multiple disabilities or who must overcome multiple forms of discrimination. I am referring, for instance, to women or first nations people with disabilities.

In short, no initiatives or support measures have been proposed for these people. No solutions have been suggested to correct problems with income security programs, which are full of employment disincentives. Am I to presume that the private sector will take care of this problem on behalf of the federal government?

The motion also fails to take into account issues of education, employment and social assistance that specifically affect working age women with disabilities, who are more likely than men to live in a low-income household. Nor are there any measures for first nations populations, who already face considerable obstacles, including severe limitations on their access to transportation, education, communications and health services. The rate of disability among this group is roughly double the Canadian average. The government therefore needs to clearly state that it intends to work in partnership with the provinces and territories, first nations and people with disabilities in order to come up with an implementation plan for Canada, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Consequently, I believe that this motion is a step in the right direction. Of course, I will be supporting it, and I am pleased by my colleague's efforts.

However, we want to see more done to change the situation. Although the motion has merit, it is just a first step, and we must go further.

The representation of disabled people in the workforce has stagnated over the past 30 years. It is time to change that and truly give them access to the labour market and a decent standard of living. This motion is the first step to getting there.

I would like to remind my colleague and the other members in the House that after spending at least 23 years in a wheelchair, I might know what I am talking about. When I say that transportation is truly a critical issue for the employability of persons with disabilities, I am speaking from experience.

Naturally, I am familiar with the problems we face when we enter the job market. One of the biggest problems is transportation. Paratransit is often run by a service that covers only a small area. In my opinion, that is one of the biggest problems.

● (1800)

Getting housing near where we work is another major problem, which is also related to transportation.

That being said, I appreciate a number of aspects of my colleague's motion. I know that he is well-meaning, but there are important aspects that must not be overlooked. I would like us to study this matter further.

[English]

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brant for his motion.

The report by the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities provided some insightful information on companies that used best practices and as well dispelled many myths about employing people with disabilities.

The Liberal Party does not disagree with any aspect of the report. The member for Brant's motion calls on the government to support a number of the actions to help reduce barriers to employment for persons with disabilities. Neither I nor my party disagrees with any of these ideas. That is why the Liberal Party will be supporting this motion.

I fully expect that my colleague from Brant will get his own government officials to support this as well. I will go out on a limb now and say that maybe he will.

The panel's report said in its concluding remarks, "It's time for Canadian businesses to step up to the challenge of employing more people with disabilities."

I would submit, and I believe that many in the disabled community would agree, that it is time for the government to step up to the plate and listen and lead when it comes to real and effective policies and initiatives that will make a difference. My concern, and I am not convinced, is that the passing of this motion will not help a great deal in making the government do that.

Ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities are protected from discrimination or respected to be given an equal opportunity to provide for themselves and their families is something Liberals have always fought for. I am proud to be a member of the Liberal Party that gave Canada the Canadian Charter of Rights that guaranteed "equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination" to individuals in Canada with mental and physical disabilities. I am also proud that our party also was responsible for the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Employment Equity Act.

These important pieces of legislation have created rights for persons with disabilities, but we need to do more to ensure that Canadians with disabilities have equal opportunities to employment to provide for themselves and their families.

Part of the solution is having a rounded approach to the issues that most affect persons with disabilities, such as living in poverty, access to transportation and housing, as we heard from my colleague from the NDP, and a long-term employment plan.

The human resources committee, of which I am a member, concluded a study on employment opportunities for persons with disabilities this spring. Several witnesses spoke to this point that enhancing opportunities of employment for people with disabilities could not be discussed in isolation of other policies and barriers that act as disincentives to work.

Dr. David Lepofsky, chair of Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance said:

Don't think about employment in isolation. We've got to tackle the barriers across the board. Transit, education, and employment must all be tackled together. The same barriers hurt in all contexts.

Laurie Beachell, national coordinator, Council of Canadians with Disabilities, spoke about a long-term employment plan, "We would call on the Government of Canada, and on Minister Finley", who was then the minister responsible, "specifically, to develop a five-year strategic plan to address employment needs—"

• (1805)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please. I usually let the first one slip by, but in that the hon. member used the name of another member of the chamber a second time, I thought I would prevent him from possibly doing it a third time.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for that. I am new around here.

I will finish the quote, which states:

One-off single issue, one-community measures will simply not get us where we hope to be.

The problem has never been that we do not know enough about the issue to do anything, but it is more a matter of political will to do what is needed. The panel's report brought to light startling myths about employing a disabled person, such as that in 57% of cases there is no cost to accommodate a disabled person, or that in 37% of cases the average cost to accommodate is under \$500. When we find out from the report that nearly 800,000 working-age Canadians with disabilities are able to work but are not working and almost half of those have post-secondary education, obviously we are failing. We are failing as a society, and there is a cost to all of us, socially and economically.

What can we do? The panel's report challenges employers to lead, but we all know that for real substantive and effective change to happen, it has to be the federal government that steps up. We heard some real ideas to help persons with disabilities at committee, just as I had mentioned. One area that was brought up by a number of witnesses was the EI program. Carmela Hutchison, president of the DisAbled Women's Network of Canada, stated:

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People with episodic and chronic illnesses often do not have enough time to qualify for benefits. There's a lack of flexible supports for chronic illnesses not deemed severe enough. Very often we see people who are struggling to maintain employment while undergoing cancer treatment, or they have MS and again they're struggling. If they take a lighter schedule, then their funding for their disability is cut to that lighter schedule. Other people have talked about being considered too disabled for one program or not disabled enough for another.

Laurie Beachell, with the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, stated:

EI has a real problem with those people who have episodic disabilities, mental health concerns, MS, those people who are well at periods of time in their life and can work, and then cannot work at certain times.

My office manager was diagnosed with MS eight years ago. I can speak first-hand to the fact that I have never met anybody more inspiring. She has been an incredible staff support person, but it is important that she pays attention to her body, and time is taken on occasion when she has to rest. If employers are able to accommodate, then the benefit is that they can continue to maintain quality staff.

One of the actions this motion calls on the government to take is to focus more on disabled youth through the youth employment strategy. I am glad my colleague included this. However, he should be aware that the number of youth assisted through the skills link program that helps youth with barriers has decreased from 32,000 under the previous Liberal government to just 12,000 at the end of last year. That is a perfect example of how the government is failing not only our youth but the disabled community as well.

I want to thank my colleague from Brant for creating this motion and for his ongoing commitment to help those with disabilities. I do not believe the challenge will be to get support to pass this motion. The real test is whether the government will actually do what is needed to give persons with disabilities a fair and equal opportunity. That will be the true test of success.

I would hate like heck not to mention that, in committee, witness after witness living with a disability said that the one thing all of them see as being a challenge further down the road is the fact that the eligibility for OAS has gone from age 65 to 67.

• (1810)

Many Canadians who have lived with disabilities live their life waiting to turn age 65. Some say it is the most affluent they have been in their entire life, because they struggled to maintain themselves and lived so close to the edge. Now that will evade them again for an additional two years. Certainly that is regrettable.

Hopefully there will be some kind of program or a change of heart or a change of government with a different heart, or a change to a government with a heart, that will recognize this shortcoming and address it.

**Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before I get to my prepared remarks, I would like to dedicate the speech I am about to make to a former student of mine named Thomas Moss. Thomas was a student I had in elementary school. He was disabled. He was stricken with Asperger's syndrome. With inclusion being implemented in the classroom, we were able to put many changes in place in the school system to support our children with special needs.

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Thomas went through that system after inclusion was put in place in our school system. He was able to go through the elementary school system. It was not without struggles, but we were able to get him through. He excelled once he was in the secondary level, once he matured physically and emotionally, and then went on to Mount Allison University at an earlier age than his colleagues, graduated with honours from Mount Allison, was able to be successfully employed, and is doing very well now.

That is what can be achieved if we have the right things in place to support children with special needs and adults with disabilities. It takes the rest of society to accommodate them and meet their needs for them to be successful. That is what we are talking about here tonight.

That is why I would like to congratulate the member for Brant on this motion. It talks about how we as a society can adapt what we do and what we feel and what we know so that we can allow this section of Canadian society to be successful.

It is on us; it is not on them. They are doing their part; we have to do ours to make sure we reach out to this very accessible, very talented, and very employable group of Canadians. We are not adequately dealing with them to make sure that we find jobs for them.

In honour of that, our government's top priority is jobs and long-term growth. That is why we believe it is important for Canadians with disabilities to actively participate in the workforce within their communities.

This is why I am so supportive of the member for Brant's motion tonight. There are many opportunities that exist, but there are also many barriers in the way of people with disabilities as they struggle to get employment.

First, people with disabilities have to overcome obstacles every day just to get to work. Gaining access to job opportunities is a different matter altogether. Many preconceived ideas still linger within the rest of society. As the member across the way said, there are over 800,000 people with disabilities in Canada who have no job, but they are capable of working. Over 400,000 of them have post-secondary degrees.

Clearly, things must change. Information, education, and increased awareness are needed. We have to dispel the myths that have helped perpetuate the unemployment and underemployment of people with disabilities and special needs.

In 2012, the government created the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The four members of this panel hold key positions with Deloitte, Loblaw's, Tim Hortons, and the Neil Squire Society.

They enthusiastically accepted the challenge our Conservative government set for them: to consult directly with employers across the country to identify private sector successes and best practices in the labour market participation of people with disabilities.

The report was entitled "Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector". It was the outcome of several months of intense work. As the panel mentioned in its report, we all have abilities; some are just

more apparent than others. I would argue that we all have abilities, but maybe people just have not taken the time to notice.

The panel took up the challenge of showing what people with disabilities are capable of accomplishing and how the private sector can better use this untapped pool of talents and skills, and the panel succeeded.

For example, the report highlighted in over half of the cases, workplace accommodations are cost-free, and in 37% of the cases that require expenditures, the average cost amounts to about \$500. Now, \$500 is not a lot of money to spend to get a highly qualified, talented employee. Most employers across the country would agree with that.

Our government agrees with the report and has acted on many of its recommendations already, including a proposal to create the Canadian employers disability forum in economic action plan 2013.

Our government supports the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, which provides support for employers to hire persons with disabilities across Canada. In 2012, we provided additional temporary support with over \$30 million over three years. Economic action plan 2013 took this one step further, proposing permanent ongoing funding of \$40 million a year starting in 2015-16. We are investing millions to support this initiative.

● (1815)

This investment is enabling us to promote job opportunities and assist individuals who have little or no labour force experience to prepare for, obtain, and keep a job, or to become self-employed. Unfortunately, both the New Democrats and Liberals voted against this measure when they voted against budget 2013.

Several other steps were recently announced in economic action plan 2013, many of which align with the recommendations of the panel. For example, a new generation of labour market agreements for persons with disabilities will be in place in 2014. As well, there will be additional funding for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, some of which will support research related to the labour market participation of people with disabilities. In addition, as mentioned earlier, there will be support for the creation of a Canadian employers disability forum, as recommended by the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, and the extension of the Enabling Accessibility Fund on an ongoing basis to support construction and renovations related to improving accessibility for people with disabilities, including in the workplace.

That said, this government is doing its part, but government cannot and should not have to do everything alone. Employers must and can do more to hire and train people with disabilities.

Employers from across the country have told us that the skills shortage is the number one barrier to growing their businesses. At the same time, we have this large pool of talented people available for work, many of them already trained and others just needing a little more training. We need to match employers with this subset of disabled Canadians to ensure we better grow the economy of the entire country. I would argue that what is good for people with disabilities is also good for employers and also good for Canada.



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We need to encourage Canadian companies to hire persons with disabilities as they look for their future labour market needs. We are seeing unprecedented labour shortages in several sectors and in several regions, and this is likely to grow as the population grows older and retires. Clearly, private sector employers must find better ways to develop this untapped pool of skilled workers existing among people with disabilities and ensure that their workplaces can accommodate their needs.

I would encourage employers to take advantage of the Canada job grant to help create guaranteed jobs for persons with disabilities. I believe the Canada job grant is a perfect way to train persons with disabilities to ensure that they have the skills and training to fill the jobs that are currently going unfilled across the country. The Government of Canada's job grant will be available to all Canadians, and despite the rhetoric, that includes the most vulnerable Canadians as well.

As the expert panel indicated, employers know better than governments when it comes to understanding what training is required. The Canada job grant will directly link Canadians with employers and available jobs. We cannot afford to forgo the talents of thousands of people who want to work, have the ability to work, and have the skills to do the work. We must act, which is why I am pleased to stand in support of Motion No. 430.

I will close by saying there are many like Thomas Moss out there across this country, young people who have been highly trained and who have the skills necessary to do a great job for employers. All they need is a chance.

It is up to us and the rest of society and employers in this country to engage with the government and with this talented pool of employees. Working together, we can do this for Canada. Let us ensure we go out there and hire some of these disabled Canadians and put them to work. They will not let us down.

• (1820)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** We are resuming debate. Before we get under way with the member for York South—Weston, we will let him know that there are about seven minutes remaining in the time allocated for private members' business. He will have the remaining time when the House next takes up debate on the question.

The hon. member for York South—Weston.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first I wish to thank the member for Brant for bringing this issue to our attention. It is of great importance to us here in the NDP. I also wish to congratulate him on his recent appointment as chair of the human resources committee. He did bring this to our attention during our study of this issue last spring, and he was very knowledgeable and caring about it.

My riding of York South—Weston has a significant proportion of individuals with disabilities, mostly because the riding is one of the places in Toronto where people can afford the housing. As a result, persons with disabilities end up in the riding because the housing is cheap and not because they necessarily want to live there. However, there are not very many supports for those individuals in the riding. There are not a whole lot of employment supports; put it that way.

This motion is a good motion, but as with the report of the government side at the human resources committee this spring, the motion does not go far enough. Our standing committee studied the issue for the 20th time in 30 years, and none of those studies resulted in any significant change in the level of employment for persons with disabilities. I fear that the most recent study will soon collect dust on a shelf, and we will be no further ahead.

We in the NDP agree with what the member for Brant is proposing. We need to do all five of the things he has asked, but that is only a very small part of the puzzle.

Unemployment among persons living with disabilities is extreme. Over half of those who want to work and who are capable of working are not working. Of 800,000 persons, nearly half have some form of post-secondary education. So the problem is not one of availability of the workforce.

The focus of the panel and of the government's report from the standing committee is to lay the problem squarely at the feet of the private sector employers. The motion goes a little beyond this, but not far. It does not address some very real government-controlled systemic issues that place persons living with disabilities at an extreme disadvantage when it comes to employment.

The standing committee heard from many witnesses who gave evidence that the income support programs in this country are not helpful in keeping persons with disabilities gainfully employed. For example, the EI system contains a mechanism by which many Canadians are protected against income loss due to illness or injury. The rules are quite rigid. One must wait for 2 weeks before claiming anything, and one is limited to 15 consecutive weeks of payments. There are no provisions for persons with episodic disabilities.

One of my co-workers years ago at the CBC underwent dialysis three times a week, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, and it took the whole day. He was out of commission for those days. The CBC, the union, and the insurance company got together and figured out a way that he could continue to receive a full salary even though he was only working three days a week. This arrangement went on for many years until his death. If he had been forced to use the EI system, he could not have had any kind of assistance whatsoever, because the EI system cannot deal with that.

The witnesses who were at the committee are not the first to urge the government to fix the system, but so far there has been no action from this or any previous federal government on this issue.

Another big flaw is in our health care system. Many persons with disabilities are heavily dependent on medical intervention to keep them alive and able to function. Motorized wheelchairs are not cheap and are generally not provided by provincial health systems. Maintenance drugs are not provided by most health systems, with the exception perhaps of Quebec. Hearing aids and seeing-eye dogs, and the list goes on, are not provided by provincial medical systems.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

There are only two ways for persons living with disabilities to get support for such medical necessities. One way is to be employed with a good employer, and that good employer would have a medical plan that provides for these things. Some do, and some do not. The other way is to be unemployed and seek assistance from the provincial government's disability program. In Ontario, the province I am most familiar with, it is called the Ontario disability support program. It is available as a form of income support for persons with disabilities. It includes a living allowance, housing help, transportation help and access to the drug benefit program, but it is not available to persons who are working.

• (1825)

Our standing committee heard from several witnesses who pointed out the Catch-22 that lies therein. Persons who want to work and can find work lose their support programs, including access to medical programs. Therefore, faced with that choice, they choose not to work. That is not any way to run a railroad.

Some disabled individuals qualify for a Canada pension disability pension. The program is designed to help those who cannot work as a result of a disability, and it carries them to age of 65, when OAS kicks in. However, with the new OAS rules, it does not start until 67, so there is a two-year gap for persons with disabilities.

The Canada pension disability program does not provide any kind of medical or other benefits. Persons who qualify, and it is difficult to qualify, are not provided with any kind of medical benefits.

It is also not easy to use it for episodic disabilities. A person who recovers sufficiently to go back to work but suffers a relapse, such as a person with multiple sclerosis, et cetera, must requalify for CPP disability, which is a long and complex process.

In closing, we support the member for Brant's motion. It is well intentioned. It essentially brings some of the recommendations from the panel to the House. It brings to the House's attention issues that need our attention, as mentioned earlier. However, as has been the case with the government side of the standing committee, it does not go far enough to address the systemic problems facing persons with disabilities in Canada in becoming employed. To repeat, those problems generally have to do with income and benefits.

We in the NDP want the government to address those issues first, and then we will have a system that is non-discriminatory in terms of income and medical support for persons with disabilities.

• (1830)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The hon. member for York South—Weston will have three minutes remaining for his remarks when the House next resumes business on the question.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Canada's natural resources, the government talks frantically about our supposed need to ship our crude oil out of the country to the United States or overseas as fast as possible.

However, the Conservative approach to resource development is ill-considered and is not in the best interests of Canada or Canadians. Instead of rushing to ship our unprocessed oil elsewhere, the government should be looking out for Canadian interests and Canadian national energy security.

Without the infrastructure to transport western oil across the country, eastern Canada has been forced to import expensive foreign oil from unstable regimes like Venezuela and the Arabian Peninsula. At the same time, we ship our unprocessed resources to foreign markets at much lower prices. This “buy high and sell low” colonial approach costs the Canadian economy a whopping \$18 billion every year.

What is more, we currently produce in Canada 40% more oil than bitumen than Canadians consume, without meeting our own energy needs. We could have a trade surplus but, instead, we have an \$18-billion deficit.

Conservative mismanagement of our natural resources has maximized profits for multinational oil companies while hurting Canadian energy security and costing our economy and our citizens dearly.

It is way overdue to fix this mess. Canada is the only major industrialized nation without a national energy strategy.

The government spends a great deal of time and energy pushing for pipelines like Keystone and the northern gateway, when these projects would only increase the deficit and export Canadian jobs.

Our wealth of natural resources in Canada could put us at a relative advantage in the global economy, if only we develop them in a sustainable way that protects our environment in the long term and creates value-added jobs for Canadians here at home soon.

Developing a national energy strategy is an important first step. We must be proactive in laying out a plan that puts Canadian energy security first. We have more than enough oil to supply all of Canada. We must supply domestic needs first and then focus on exports. Energy security for Canada is not just the best economic option, it is also a more environmentally-sound approach to using our resources.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

By using our own oil instead of importing from foreign nations, we could be able to ensure that we adhere to higher environmental standards. In exercising greater control over our resources, we could ensure that oil sands production would remain responsible and sustainable.

Once upon a time, Canada had 44 oil refineries across the country. Now, as a result of shipping Canadian resources abroad, we only have 14.

The Conservatives are shipping our jobs overseas. Let us process our own resources here so we can create economic opportunities and employment for local communities across the country.

Canadians do not want the few temporary construction jobs that would come from Keystone. We want long-term employment and economic stability that would come from a real plan.

Therefore, I ask the government once again: Where is our national energy strategy? Where is our plan for protecting Canadian energy security and building up our economy? Where are the long-term, value-added jobs that Canada really needs? Finally, why do the Conservatives always put American and big oil interests ahead of the best interests of Canada and Canadians?

• (1835)

**Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question, because it is very important to understand what is happening with the energy sector in this country.

Contrary to what the member is talking about, that we supposedly do not have a plan, we do have a plan. As a matter of fact, the Conservative government has a responsible resource development plan that maximizes its natural resources industry.

As the member is talking about the oil not only going to the south but into eastern Canada, allow me to tell him that this is exactly what part of this strategy is. We have several pipeline expansion proposals, which are currently under discussion, going east to the refineries in Quebec and New Brunswick. Yes, it is indeed very important that our natural resources, specifically in the oil sector, are developed in such a manner that they offer advantages to the whole country. For the member to say that we are looking after American interests is absolutely false.

What is important is that we need markets. Markets are everywhere around the world. Selling to a market down to the south or across to the east or west is a comprehensive strategy in which we can export and develop our resources, most importantly our energy resources.

The Prime Minister said that we are aspiring to be an energy superpower. The only way we can be an energy superpower is when

we use all of our resources to develop our energy sector, not what the member is alluding to, that we are in the hand of America. We are not. I can assure the member that all Canadians will benefit from the energy sector.

Between 2000 and 2012, more than 99% of crude oil and petroleum was transported in Canada. I want to emphasize that 99.999% of this transportation was done safely.

We will continue working on this to ensure that as Canada's energy sector grows stronger and develops, it benefits Canadians first.

**Mr. Bruce Hyer:** Mr. Speaker, of course they are our oil resources, but use them intelligently.

I was the first member of the House to stand up and call for the transport of Canadian oil from west to east. Here, the minister, the Prime Minister and the Conservative Party are shilling for American oil interests and multinational corporations, while sacrificing Canadian jobs, environmental integrity, and energy security.

When will the Conservative government stand up for all of Canada, including the interests of eastern Canada, and be smarter about our resource development? We have the economic potential and an eager workforce to move Canadian resource development forward in a sustainable way.

Supporting the transport of Canadian oil across the country would give western Canada a new market for our oil and give eastern Canada a more dependable and cheaper source of energy, but only if we refine it here for our use first. When we put Canadian energy security first, everyone wins.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Speaker, I will agree with the member that everyone will win if we develop these resources very intelligently and carefully, as the Conservative government is doing.

The member is very much right in that by 2035 Canada's crude oil production is expected to be about 5.8 million barrels per day, which is 75% higher than in 2012. This is tremendous and enormous resource potential, and we need to have energy infrastructure, including pipelines running west, south, and east.

I want to assure the member that the Conservative government is developing its energy resource sector to benefit all Canadians.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:40 p.m.)



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