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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, May 7, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 7, 2014

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

● (1405)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Trinity Western University, near my community, is opening up a law school. The Law Society of British Columbia will allow Trinity law grads to practise in B.C. when they pass their bar exams. However, the Law Societies of Ontario and Nova Scotia have decided they will not let Trinity law grads practise. Surprisingly, the reason is not because of academic standards. The decisions were entirely political.

The Ontario and Nova Scotia law societies simply do not like Trinity's Christian code of conduct for its students. In an age that highly values tolerance, this discrimination is the height of intolerance. It is a clear violation of these would-be lawyers' charter right to freedom of religion. The rule of law requires that law societies treat all applicants equally. Trinity is now going to court to defend the rights of its students.

I call on the Ontario and Nova Scotia law societies to reverse themselves and for the Manitoba and New Brunswick societies, which are considering the issue, to do the right thing.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN NETWORK FOR MATERNAL, NEWBORN AND CHILD HEALTH

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in honour of Mother's Day, we would like to applaud the Canadian Network for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, a

network that is composed of 70 NGOs, educational institutions, and professional associations that are working to improve the lives of women and children in developing countries.

There is an urgent need to speed up progress and place a high priority on reaching the most vulnerable women, newborns, and children.

[English]

Last month the executive director of the United Nations Population Fund reminded us of the importance of universal access to quality reproductive and sexual health and rights for all. Canada should ensure that our maternal, newborn and child health policy respects these rights.

I thank the Canadian Network for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health for its excellent work.

[Translation]

Happy Mother's Day!

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[English]

CITY OF SARNIA

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to congratulate the city of Sarnia on its centennial.

One hundred years ago today, the Duke of Connaught, then Governor General of Canada, arrived with his daughter Princess Patricia to lend royal prestige to Sarnia's inauguration.

Grain elevators, lake-going ships, and trains defined life in the early 20th century in the city. The timber, oil, and agricultural sectors were major parts of its early culture. Sarnia's port was one of the busiest in Canada.

The Great Western Railway and the Grand Trunk Railway played important roles in Sarnia's growth and eventually led to the expansion of Imperial Oil. The Polymer Corporation was created in 1942 to manufacture synthetic rubber during the war, which established Sarnia as a major petrochemical centre.

Today, Sarnia still stands as a bastion of innovation. The biofuels sector leads a renaissance of the petrochemical industry, and new eco-friendly projects are commonplace. Also, our mayor, Mike Bradley, is one of the longest-serving mayors in all of Canada.

Today, on behalf of all members of the House, I commend Sarnia on its centennial.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw attention to the University of Ottawa's Alumni Day, which my *alma mater* will be celebrating on Friday, May 9.

On the occasion of the University of Ottawa's Alumni Week 2014, I would like to recognize the some 89,000 graduates of this institution who live and work in the national capital region.

The University of Ottawa, a world-class research and educational institution, is the world's largest bilingual university and makes a significant contribution to our regional economy. Its graduates are at the very heart of our vibrant communities.

● (1410)

[English]

On this special day, it is with great pride that I, as one of its graduates, call upon all citizens to celebrate the success of this post-secondary educational institution. I invite you, Mr. Speaker, along with several other of our colleagues from all parties who are also University of Ottawa alumni, to proudly wear our school colours, the garnet and grey, and to attend some of the events planned on campus for the rest of this week.

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PATRIOTISM IN STROMONT—DUNDAS—SOUTH GLENGARRY

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in less than two months Canada will be celebrating her 147th birthday.

For 147 years, Canadians from all walks of life have contributed to create a country that is the envy of the world.

This country was built on the backs of giants, the proud men and women who went before us.

The constituents of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry are also very proud of this magnificent country, and we show it. For the past seven years, thousands and thousands of residents of SDSG have proudly displayed a Canadian flag at their homes each and every July 1. As a matter of fact, the riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry has claimed the title of “Most Patriotic Riding in Canada” six out of the last seven years.

Every resident in my wonderful riding is truly proud to be a Canadian, and that is why I encourage each and every constituent of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry to again proudly display our glorious maple leaf this July 1.

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MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the third year that I rise to speak about multiple sclerosis. I do so in the hope of a cure, as my family is among the thousands in Canada directly affected by MS. My brother Chris has suffered from this disease for years, and it is getting worse.

There is research ongoing to find a cure, funded in part by the Ministry of Health and the MS Society. My brother, who is 60, is not confident that a cure will be found in his lifetime. He and others are upset with how the investigation into CCSVI, a possible therapy, is going. There are issues of co-operation with other researchers in the United States. One can understand their frustration as this disease progresses.

What are the things we can do to help MS victims and their families while a cure is being found? We can make it easier for people with MS and other episodic disabilities to keep working. We can improve income support, such as employment insurance, for people with MS who are unable to work or who can only work intermittently.

I hope all members of this House would support these initiatives for which families with MS are asking.

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ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in May 2002, the Government of Canada signed an official declaration to designate the month of May as Asian Heritage Month.

Based on the 2011 census, there are over five million Asian Canadians from all over the world, representing approximately 12% of the Canadian population, all contributing to the unique and cultural society that Canadians value.

This month we will celebrate the heritage and history of Asian Canadians who have made notable contributions to this great country, a country that is one of the most culturally diverse in the world.

It is this diversity that strengthens Canada socially, politically and economically in monumental ways. Asian Heritage Month is a celebration where cities and communities across Canada will embrace and celebrate the values and customs of Asian Canadians. Let us embrace and celebrate the wide range of Asian cultures, ethnicities and traditions present in Canada.

These celebrations will be held across Canada, including in my riding of Willowdale. I invite all Canadians to take part in the festivities and celebrations that honour the contributions of Asian Canadians.

* * *

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the highest rate of multiple sclerosis in the world. Not only do 100,000 Canadians live with MS, but their families, friends, and communities live with MS as well.

Today, I am wearing a carnation to support 1 Day in May, a campaign to raise awareness of MS and the impacts on those who are affected.

Statements by Members

Canadians living with MS and their caregivers cope with the challenges of a demanding illness that comes and goes and worsens over time. This affects their employment and financial security.

People in this situation need options that support their continued employment, while respecting the daily challenges that they face. I urge each of us, at least one day in May, to effect positive change in the life of someone with MS.

Let us also commit to ending MS in our lifetime.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

MOTHERS WITHOUT STATUS

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with Mother's Day coming up on Sunday, I would like to take about Ivonne Hernandez Segura, whose asylum claim was rejected and who is facing deportation.

Ms. Hernandez was the victim of serious domestic violence in her country of origin; that is a recognized fact. In 2012, Ms. Hernandez became pregnant. She was the subject of a deportation order. Therefore, she could not access the health care she needed for a reasonable cost. Nevertheless, she gave birth to her first child on Canadian soil. Her relationship with the father deteriorated, she once again became a victim of domestic violence, and she was forced to flee.

Shortly before she was to be deported, amid strong public support, the court postponed proceedings, citing the irreparable damage that would be caused if she were to be deported and separated from her son, who was 14 months old at the time.

As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Canada has a duty to act in the best interests of the child. I seriously doubt that separating the child from his mother and deporting her is in his best interests.

I rise in the House today on behalf of Ivonne Hernandez and all mothers without status who are in a similar situation to say that we can do better. We must do better.

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[English]

MOM-MENTUM MOTHER'S DAY TEA

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I attended the Mom-mentum Mother's Day Tea, hosted by the Canadian Network for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. This important event highlights the significant work being done worldwide by Canadian partners and the Canadian government to save more mothers and children.

Canada has taken a leadership role in addressing the health challenges faced by women, newborns and children. Our G8 Muskoka initiative on maternal, newborn and child health will save the lives of millions of moms and babies.

Later this month Canada will host a summit where civil society, private sector, global and Canadian leaders in health will come

together to build a consensus on where to focus efforts to maximize results for those in need.

As the Prime Minister stated, "But when the need is great and the cause is just, Canadians are always there. And we always will be. Because that is what Canadians do".

Canadians can be proud of our record of saving moms and babies.

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NATIONAL DAY OF HONOUR

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Friday, the nation will pause to honour the brave Canadian women and men who served in Afghanistan and who too often made the ultimate sacrifice in the defence of our most cherished values.

[Translation]

The Canadian mission in Afghanistan lasted over 12 years and cost the lives of more than 160 Canadians, including a diplomat, a journalist and two civilian contractors.

On behalf of New Democrats from sea to sea, I would like to thank the brave men and women who served in Afghanistan, as well as their families.

We will never forget your sacrifice.

[English]

As we mark the end of the mission, let us recommit to ensuring a peaceful future for Afghanistan and let us recommit to ensuring that all our vets get the support they need and deserve.

[Translation]

Our soldiers carried out their mission. Now it is our turn to carry out ours.

* * *

[English]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago the world was outraged to learn of the kidnapping of almost 300 Nigerian schoolgirls from their schools by a terrorist organization, Boko Haram, in Nigeria. Yesterday, we learned that this group has kidnapped another eight young girls.

Violence against children must be met with swift action and justice. Girls, regardless of the country they live in, should be able to pursue an education and a future free from the fear of slavery, violence, and sexual abuse. For we all know that a country's successful development is a result of the empowerment of its women and girls.

The Government of Canada has strongly condemned these kidnappings in Nigeria, and the Minister of International Development has offered Canada's assistance to the Nigerian government as it works to secure the release of these young girls. Canada will continue to fight injustice and gender violence and promote the human rights and safety of women and girls worldwide.

Oral Questions

● (1420)

KOMAGATA MARU

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the centennial anniversary of the *Komagata Maru* incident, a dark moment in Canada's history.

It was on May 23, 1914, when a ship called the *Komagata Maru* anchored in the Burrard Inlet just outside of Vancouver. However, due to Canada's exclusion laws during that time, the migrants were not allowed to get off the small boat, which was a former coal ship. On board were British subjects of Indian heritage, including 12 Hindus, 24 Muslims, and 340 Sikhs, all of whom had come to start a new life here in Canada. The small ship was forced to return to India 60 days after its arrival, with 326 men, women, and children who were never allowed to get off the former coal cargo boat.

In 2008, the Liberal Party motion called on the government to apologize. The motion passed unanimously. As we mark what will be the 100th anniversary of this tragic event, I would ask that the Prime Minister provide a formal apology here on the floor of the House of Commons this month.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently I saw a letter from the son of a 92-year-old World War II veteran with limited mobility, who inquired about the Meals on Wheels program for his father. Within five minutes of phoning Veterans Affairs, that veteran's request was approved. His son was very grateful for that and for the other great service the family has received.

Thankfully, veterans in Canada do have a wide range of means to access the benefits and services they need, and I am glad this veteran's son took advantage of it. I have heard from many veterans who rely on the great service they receive from Veterans Affairs Canada, but we can always do better.

To that end, I am very pleased to say that all 10 members of the veterans affairs committee are working hard together to make meaningful recommendations so that our courageous and deserving veterans can have fast and easy access to the benefits they need and deserve.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have been dealing with the Conservatives' incompetence for three years now. They are incapable of replacing our troops' fighter jets, incapable of ensuring home mail delivery, incapable of protecting Canadians' personal information, and incapable of ensuring rail safety.

Yesterday, the Auditor General added another layer: prison population management does not take into account the adoption of the Conservatives' own policies, which is counterproductive and dangerous for employees.

Also, Statistics Canada data are no longer reliable because of the Conservatives' attack on the long form census.

This long list of abuses is not surprising because it is always the same thing with them: no planning, governing by headlines, and using victims of crime and soldiers for self-promotion. Meanwhile, investing money for resources, for example, is out of the question because the government has to balance the budget before the next election.

Canadians deserve better. They deserve a competent government that does more than just pretend to represent their interests. For that, they can obviously count on the NDP.

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[English]

VENEZUELA

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned by the protests that began in early February in cities across Venezuela. We are saddened by the more than 40 deaths and thousands of arrests.

Our government has reiterated on numerous occasions its support for the right of peaceful protest and freedom of expression for all citizens of Venezuela. Canada recognizes the need for Venezuela to observe due process of law with regard to those who are detained during the protests, as well as for political leaders such as Ms. Machado, a democratically elected member of the national assembly who is facing removal from elected office for her efforts to draw attention to the situation in her country.

We also call on authorities to release those who have been arbitrarily detained. Our government continues to urge both sides to engage in meaningful and respectful dialogue and address the political divisions within the country.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today Nigeria is asking for assistance in locating 270 school girls kidnapped by the terrorist group, Boko Haram.

Can the Prime Minister please tell Canadians what assistance Canada is willing to provide to deal with this horrific crime?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, let me repeat what the Minister of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

We condemn what has gone on with Boko Haram in the strongest possible terms. This is truly a crime against innocent individuals and we are very concerned by the growth of what is a very extreme terrorist organization.

Obviously, there have been discussions between our government authorities in Nigeria. We are willing to provide a range of assistance and that offer, of course, remains open.

•(1425)

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, 11 former presidents of the Canadian Bar Association condemned the Prime Minister for the unfounded and gratuitous accusations he made against the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Today, the Council of Canadian Law Deans called the Prime Minister's remarks an "unprecedented attack on one of the most important institutions of Canada's constitutional democracy".

Will the Prime Minister finally apologize to the chief justice for this shameful attack?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week it was alleged that I was not aware of an issue regarding the eligibility of judges for appointment to the Supreme Court.

I was fully aware of the issue and, at the same time, I expressed my concerns about the possibility that this issue could be brought before the courts. For that reason, I consulted independent experts. We accepted the advice of those experts and that was the appropriate course of action.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the Federal Court is keeping open the lawsuit challenging the Prime Minister's appointment of Marc Nadon to the Supreme Court in case the Prime Minister should try to reappoint him. Apparently, the Federal Court does not think the Prime Minister has been very clear on that question.

Will the Prime Minister state, once and for all, that he will not try in any way, shape or form to reappoint Marc Nadon to the Supreme Court of Canada?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, we have been very clear on that question. The government will follow the decision of the majority of the Supreme Court of Canada. I repeat again, of course, that we agree with the majority decision.

I would point out the difficulty that this is going to create going forward. This means that Quebec judges will have less opportunity in our court system. This means that judges from Quebec on the Federal Court will be second-class judges without the same eligibility requirements as their colleagues from other parts of the country. It also means that we will have increasing difficulty recruiting Quebec judges for the Federal Court and maintaining it as an important national institution. However, that is the decision and we will abide by it.

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[Translation]

VETERANS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to *Acadie Nouvelle*, the Conservatives apparently asked a 91-year-old veteran to pay for his airfare out of his own

Oral Questions

pocket in order to attend the ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Normandy. This is not the first time that we have heard about Canadian soldiers and their families being asked to pay their own way to attend memorial ceremonies.

All we are asking the Prime Minister is whether or not this report is true. If it is, what will he do about it?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I know nothing about this case. However, I can assure the House of Commons that it is the government's policy to pay the travel expenses of our veterans.

Despite the age of these veterans, we have a large delegation, and I will be proud to be with them in Normandy.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Conservatives had to be publicly shamed into paying for the families of soldiers killed in Afghanistan to attend the memorial in Ottawa this Friday. Now, there are reports that Conservatives are asking World War II veterans to pay to attend the 70th-anniversary memorial in Normandy.

All we are asking, therefore, is for the Prime Minister to guarantee, which is a very simple thing to say, that no Canadian World War II veteran will be asked to pay their own way for those D-Day memorials. Yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to correct what the leader of the NDP said in his preamble. The government has made clear from the outset its intention to pay for all the families of the fallen and to make sure that their costs are covered for the Afghan ceremony on May 9. We are very proud to do that.

Also, we are taking a very large delegation of veterans with us to the D-Day ceremonies, and of course, as has always been our policy, we will make sure that veterans do not pay their own costs for that.

* * *

•(1430)

JUSTICE

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's attack on the Supreme Court was beneath the office that he holds. Canadians across the country have noticed that the Prime Minister has still not withdrawn his remarks about the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. Will he do so now?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, as I have said before, it was alleged last week by another source that the government, myself particularly, were not properly informed of issues of eligibility on the Supreme Court appointment. As I said, that is clearly not the case. In fact, because I was fully aware of this matter and also aware of the fact that it could be brought before the courts, and eventually was brought before the courts, we decided to seek advice from outside the courts from independent experts, and we followed that advice. Those actions on my part, and on the part of the government, were entirely appropriate.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we hear more examples every day from the broken temporary foreign worker program: a crane operator in Vernon, with 37 years' experience, who lost his job because of the program; a high school fast food worker, whose hours were cut by two-thirds as guest workers were brought in; or Canadian pilots who, according to the labour minister, are seeing their wages driven down by temporary foreign pilots.

Tonight will the Prime Minister vote for our plan to fix his mess?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the government has for some time been recognizing some of the problems. That is why in the past three years we have brought in a series of reforms and continue to bring in reforms, reforms that have in fact lowered the application intake by 30%. We have done that in spite of the fact that the Liberal Party has voted against those reforms and the Liberal Party members have constantly been lobbying the government and lobbying the minister to bring in more foreign workers, something the member himself has done. Obviously, we are going in a very different direction than the Liberal Party.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the number of temporary foreign workers across the country has doubled since this government came to power. Although the Minister of Employment and Social Development insists on claiming that there is no problem, we know that the program is being abused and mismanaged.

Will the Prime Minister vote in favour of overhauling this broken program this evening?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the past three years the government has made improvements to the program and has implemented rules to strengthen it. These measures helped lower the application intake by 30%, despite the fact that the Liberal Party voted against all of these reforms and that Liberal Party members are still lobbying us to bring more temporary foreign workers into their ridings.

Our approach is obviously quite different from that of the Liberal Party, which wants to expand the program.

[English]

PENSIONS

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General noted that he found a pattern across the Conservative government. It was a pattern of simply reacting to events, not planning and thinking of the longer term. In particular, he looked at the public sector pensions.

The President of the Treasury Board has already actually nodded in agreement and said that he agrees with the Auditor General's report, but can he tell us how he got into a situation where there is no long-term analysis of these three pension plans to ensure that they are actually sustainable for the longer term for those beneficiaries and for Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday in response to the Auditor General's report, we are in broad agreement that governance issues respecting those plans should always be reviewed and that there should be greater collaboration and greater expression to the taxpayers on how these plans are actually governed. That is the direction the government was going in, in any event.

On the question of sustainability, though, I can say that we have taken action as a government to make sure that taxpayers pay only 50% of the cost of the public sector pension benefits. We have raised the maximum pension age to 65. These are things that make sure that this pension plan will be sustainable for the future and for the taxpayers.

* * *

● (1435)

NORTHERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General also outlined how Conservatives have bungled the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency from the start.

The government has failed to create a real headquarters in the north and has no plans to do so. Thirty-five per cent of CanNor's staff are in Ottawa, compared to less than a third in Iqaluit. One senior position was even filled by a person who lives in Iqaluit but was moved to Ottawa.

Why is the minister moving northerners to Ottawa instead of creating a northern headquarters, as she promised?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency accepts the Auditor General's recommendations, and the minister has already given the agency clear instructions to immediately improve its administrative procedures.

We will continue to make record investments in the north to help foster a strong northern economy that creates jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity for the benefit of northerners and all Canadians. We will do it without a \$20 billion NDP carbon tax.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberals, SNC-Lavalin managed to get a \$6 billion contract over 10 years to manage federal buildings.

This led to expenses that included \$2,000 for two plants, \$5,000 to change six light bulbs, \$1,000 for a doorbell and \$36,000 to clean the Minister of International Development's office. It was essentially an open bar.

However, we learned in the Auditor General's report that was released yesterday that the next contract for federal buildings will be worth double the amount.

What does the minister plan to do to prevent this kind of abuse?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very aware of our responsibilities to Canadian taxpayers.

That is why we took the necessary measures to identify the problems with contracting. I am pleased to say that we have recovered some money. We will award contracts and administer them effectively.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance, tax evasion and tax avoidance costs Canadians billions every year, but when the Auditor General asked the Department of Finance how it planned to crack down on these tax cheats, his department stonewalled and actually hid documents from the Auditor General.

When will the minister give up on his “hear no evil, see no evil” approach to tax cheats and hand over all the documents the Auditor General needs to do his important work?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me just reply to the comments regarding the availability of documents. Of course, for over 40 years, there has been a consistent government approach when it comes to cabinet confidences. We are applying that approach, “we” meaning the public officials, because of course, the politicians do not get to make those decisions.

However, there are other ways we can co-operate with the Auditor General, and we will find ways to do so.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I guess he just figured out the pecking order in cabinet. It is déjà vu all over again for this minister. Either he is unwilling or is unable to answer basic questions about his files.

Maybe hiding information is common practice on Bay Street, but it is not acceptable when he is the Minister of Finance and it is the Auditor General who is demanding important documents from his department. The Auditor General said he was surprised the Conservatives refused to hand over these documents.

Why is the minister hiding information about billions in tax avoidance and lost revenues? When will he actually get tough on tax crime?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say it again for the record. These are cabinet confidences. Public officials other than governmental officials, politicians, and cabinet ministers get to make those decisions.

This is in compliance with a Supreme Court of Canada ruling. I thought the hon. members on the other side supported the Supreme Court of Canada, but maybe not.

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EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, We can all count on Conservatives for one thing: they are always happy to play fast and loose with the facts. However, the Auditor General is just the latest person to point out problems with the government's numbers.

This is the same information used to determine labour market opinions for companies applying for temporary foreign workers.

How does the minister expect Canadians to trust this program when the job data it is based on is so unreliable?

● (1440)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I regret to inform the member that she is mistaken. The data to which she refers has nothing to do with approvals under the temporary foreign worker program.

Moreover, I have been consistent in saying that we do not have general labour shortages. However, we do appear to have sectoral and regional skills gaps, which she, I believe, has herself recognized. We need to do a better job with respect to labour market information generally to inform the public discourse on the skills gap. The key thing is that we all work together to prepare Canadians for the jobs of the future. That is why we are pleased to have delivered the Canada job grant.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives knew for over two years and did nothing. No wonder that minister keeps trying to distract with his attacks on the NDP.

Even the Minister of Labour raised the alarm about hiring foreign airline crews due to concerns that wages would be driven down and Canadians would lose their jobs. For years now, the minister has ignored the warnings and failed workers in Canada.

Why is the minister still dragging his feet instead of fixing the mess he made of this program?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister pointed out, last year we further tightened the program, which has resulted in a 20% to 30% reduction in the number of labour market opinion applications. Employers are now facing sanctions, including being added to the blacklist if they have not complied with the rules of the program.

We are well on our way to finalizing the second package of reforms to address abuses of the program and any aspects of it which may be resulting in distortions in the Canadian labour market.

I invite from her, or colleagues in any of the parties, constructive and specific ideas about how we can strike that appropriate balance between legitimate labour mobility and protecting the Canadian worker.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government was warned a number of times about problems with the temporary foreign worker program. Conservative MPs even sounded the alarm two years ago about Canadian airline pilots and flight attendants being replaced by foreign workers. However, nothing changed. The ministers at the time passed the buck.

Today, how can we believe the Minister of Employment and Social Development's claim that he wants to change the program when, two years ago, he did nothing, even when his own caucus alerted him to problems?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the member is mistaken in saying that nothing has changed. On the contrary, we changed and tightened the program rules a year ago. We extended the mandatory period for which employers seeking foreign workers must advertise positions. We added a number of questions to the applications for labour market opinions. We introduced application fees, which has caused the number of applications to drop by 20% to 30%. We will be making even more changes in the near future.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the temporary foreign worker program is the victim of the incompetence of successive Liberal and Conservative governments and a lack of reliable data.

The monthly data from Statistics Canada do not show where the job vacancies are in a given province. The tools used by the Conservatives do not distinguish between Fort McMurray and Medicine Hat. The Conservatives do not even know if there is a lack of architects or medical researchers.

Does the problem not come down to the fact that the minister is no more reliable than his data?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a hundred times, Canada is not experiencing a general labour shortage. However, we do appear to have sectoral and regional skills gaps. Many NDP members have recognized and admitted that this is true.

I must point out that last Friday, the NDP participated in a press conference in Vancouver to say that the moratorium on the food service industry's access to the program must be lifted. The NDP's position is completely inconsistent.

[*English*]

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report this week says StatsCan is not collecting good enough jobs data, and the Minister of Employment himself has just admitted we need better labour market data.

The government's evisceration of data collection makes for bad policy. It is like driving blindfolded. Southwestern Ontario has seen a huge influx of temporary foreign workers, but we have no way of knowing what sectors they are working in.

Will the Conservatives reverse their cuts to StatsCan so we can have better data and better policy for all Canadians?

● (1445)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, contrary to what the member just said, we do have a very good idea of what sectors those workers are working in. I have in front of me the report on labour market opinions issued for temporary foreign workers in the Windsor area, and the overwhelming majority of these LMOs were issued for industrial instrument technicians and mechanics for less than six months. These would typically be people who are installing equipment, equipment that is purchased from perhaps the United States. They come up here to either repair or install equipment.

If she would bother to speak to the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, they would tell her that without these repair people, the equipment in the factories would stop producing and all the jobs would be lost.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is clearly discord in the Conservative caucus on temporary foreign workers, but yesterday the minister made it crystal clear that he takes the advice of his colleagues so seriously that he leaps into action when they express their concerns. Let us test this theory.

The member for Souris—Moose Mountain has asked the government to lift the ban on the food services sector within weeks. Will the minister leap to comply with this request from a valued colleague?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member he cites said exactly the same thing I did, which is that we intend to lift the moratorium when we announce the second series of reforms to the temporary foreign worker program, which we hope to release in a few weeks.

However, the real problem here is the total incoherence of the Liberal Party. On one day a member will say to shut down the program. Then another one will scamper over here to ask for a whole bunch more temporary foreign workers in his or her constituency, and then yesterday some other members said the program is very important and should be defended.

Oral Questions

I cannot figure out which of the many positions of the Liberal Party is the official one.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every Liberal and MP believes this is a good program if it is administered properly, but because these people have made such a huge mess of it, there is no choice but for MPs to represent their constituents.

Here is example two. A year after the labour minister expressed her concerns about airlines favouring temporary foreign pilots over Canadian pilots, the minister's department told him it had gone ahead and the foreign pilots had been hired anyway.

Why does he brush off these serious concerns of his own labour minister, as he did for the MP I mentioned in the first question?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Perhaps the audio system is not working over there, Mr. Speaker. I said I agreed with the member's comment.

Second, it is not politicians who make the decisions in administrative law. It is highly trained officials acting independently. If he would like to stand in judgment of the LMO applications, we know that the restaurants in his riding for which he is advocating will be getting temporary foreign workers.

By the way, yesterday Liberal MPs said the program was just fine under Liberal administration and we should revert to their rules. I guess that means bringing back the Liberals' stripper program.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a recent American government report is sounding the alarm about the disastrous consequences of climate change.

The situation is troubling straight across the continent. Climate change is not some distant problem. It is a tangible reality that is getting harder and harder to afford. In fact, it is more costly to do nothing than to take action.

In light of this report, will the Conservatives finally take action to regulate greenhouse gas emissions in the oil and gas sector?

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is exactly why we are taking action. Our sector-by-sector approach is working. It is part of our government's commitment to protecting our environment while keeping the Canadian economy strong. Thanks to our actions, carbon emissions will go down close to 130 megatonnes from what they would have been under the Liberals. This is equivalent to shutting down 37 coal-fired electricity-generating plants.

We are accomplishing this without the \$20 billion Liberal-NDP job-killing carbon tax, which would raise the price of everything.

• (1450)

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems "ecosystem" and "sustainability" mean nothing to the government,

so I will try using some words that even a Conservative minister can understand.

Jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity will be severely hurt if we refuse to act on—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I think some members were a little premature in their applause. I will ask them to hold off until the member is finished putting the question.

The hon. member for Halifax has the floor.

Ms. Megan Leslie: They almost got there, Mr. Speaker.

Jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity will actually be hurt if we do not act on climate change. The new American report tells us that the situation is alarming, yet inaction seems to be the central policy of the minister.

When will the government do the right thing and, at the very least, regulate the emissions coming from the oil and gas sector?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows that we are working with the oil and gas sector and working with the provinces to make sure that we get these regulations right.

Let us compare. She talked about the NDP's position versus our position. Our sector-by-sector approach is working. What does the NDP offer? It offers a job-killing carbon tax.

That is our approach versus their approach. The NDP is all tax and no action; our actions are getting the job done.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Stephen Harper's economy—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. It is an easy fix. The hon. member has to refer to his colleagues by riding or title but not proper name, so if he can make that adjustment I think the House would appreciate it.

The hon. member can finish putting his question.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, more Canadians are living paycheque to paycheque, so when they go on parental leave or sick leave they cannot afford to be left hanging, yet 82% of Canadians who make a claim under EI are waiting more than 28 days before they even get a response. In my riding, I have heard from a number of constituents who are barely getting by while they wait for a claim to be processed.

How could the minister claim that cuts to Service Canada are not having an impact, and what is he going to do to correct this problem right now?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that Service Canada is actually progressively reducing the wait times, and 68% of applications are being finalized within four weeks of the application being made, which is 28 days. We continue to move closer toward the targeted service standard.

I have just received a report from my parliamentary secretary, who is looking at further efficiencies that could be made so that we can ensure that people get their benefits in a timely fashion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are witnessing the inevitable. As reported in *Le Devoir* this morning, and as the NDP has been saying since the employment insurance reform was implemented, the most recent assessment report indicates that only 38% of the unemployed qualify for benefits. What a sorry record.

Before the Liberals and the Conservatives took an axe to the program, 85% of unemployed Canadians had access to employment insurance.

When will the government improve the employment insurance program so that workers who have lost their job can get assistance?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the figures that the member mentioned are in no way reflective of reality because they include workers who voluntarily left their job. The figures also include people who worked only for a few weeks and are not eligible for employment insurance.

In fact, more than 85% of unemployed people who apply for employment insurance benefits are receiving them. The program is there for the unemployed, so that they can find good jobs.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains steadfast in its support for Ukraine. We will not stand idly by while its sovereignty and its territorial integrity are being threatened.

We have shown strong support for the people of Ukraine and the NATO alliance with a commitment of six CF-18 fighter jets, the frigate HMCS *Regina*, and the participation of Canadian army soldiers in Exercise Orzel Alert in Poland.

Can the Minister of National Defence please update the House on Canada's commitment to NATO's reassurance measures and to the people of Ukraine?

• (1455)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have hosted General Philip Breedlove, the NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. We had a number of productive meetings. The general wanted to make a point by thanking Canada for our contribution to NATO's Ukrainian reassurance package, describing our efforts as timely and important.

Canada will do its part to support our NATO allies and stand up to the Putin regime.

I again want to thank our brave men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces for the amazing work they do on our behalf.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Infrastructure is digging in his heels and refusing to accept that without an integrated transportation plan, developed jointly with Quebec and Montreal area municipalities, his toll will create chaos on the roads.

Quebec has clearly shown that a toll on the Champlain Bridge will create major traffic jams on the other bridges. Quebec's economy is already losing \$4 billion a year because of lost productivity caused by gridlock.

How many more billions is the minister willing to allow the city to lose?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are building this new bridge largely out of consideration for the economy in eastern Canada and the greater Montreal region. Things are moving forward. A new bridge will be built.

The request for qualifications for consortiums interested in building the new bridge closes today. While my friend keeps talking, we are getting things done.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, between the credible studies by the Government of Quebec and this minister's empty promises, which are baseless, the choice is easy.

The Conservatives claim to be pro-economy, but they are about to kill the economy of Montreal and Quebec. Clogging up the other routes into Montreal will have a devastating impact. Studies clearly show that the toll will be catastrophic.

If the minister has a study that proves the contrary, we would love to see it.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, construction is under way on a temporary causeway-bridge to bypass traffic from the existing Île des Soeurs Bridge precisely to keep traffic and the region's economy moving.

While they keep talking, we keep working. I thank all those who are working on the new bridge project. We will deliver it through a public-private partnership. There will be a bridge and there will be a toll.

JUSTICE

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we already know that the Conservatives just cannot work with the provinces and the consequences of that.

Here is another example. The Winnipeg Drug Treatment Court may have to close its doors due to the lack of a clear commitment from the federal government to continue funding this program even though its effectiveness has been proven.

My question is simple: Will the minister promise to promptly cooperate with the Manitoba government and renew funding for this important rehabilitation program?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that when it comes to addressing problems with respect to drug crime, when it comes to taking a comprehensive approach, we are the only party in the House that does so.

In fact, with regard to this pilot project that addresses concerns identified by the Winnipeg Drug Treatment Court that the hon. member mentioned, we have provided significant funding to this program over the years.

Part of the approach is to be tougher on sentencing for those criminal organizations that exploit the addictions of others for personal profit. It is a shame that the opposition continues to vote against those efforts to improve the safety of Canadians.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again Conservatives just refuse to base their decisions on facts, evidence, or science.

The 2012-13 reoffending rate dropped to just 16% because of the Winnipeg Drug Treatment Court. That is well below the percentage of the regular court system. That is a fact.

Conservatives love to hold press conferences to boast about being tough on crime, and here they cannot support efforts that have actually reduced crime.

Will the minister recognize the success of this court and commit, today, to renewing its funding, and stop blaming—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

• (1500)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to have the hon. member, the justice critic for the NDP, finally admitting on record that she and her party are not tough on crime. It is nice to have that on the record.

It is also nice to note that she acknowledges that this program, funded by the Conservative government, has been very successful when it comes to drug treatment.

That is why this pilot project continues to be part of the national anti-drug strategy. It is why this project has been viewed nationally as a success. As with all programs, we will continue to examine the propriety of continuing funding.

Oral Questions

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are appalled by the more than 300 Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped from their village simply for attending school.

Yesterday the Minister of Foreign Affairs called the situation repugnant and said the Minister of International Development was offering assistance to Nigerian authorities.

We support the government in offering assistance. Can the minister tell us how the government is working with our allies to ensure that our efforts are coordinated and targeted, and will help bring these girls home?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to do all we can to support Nigerian authorities in finding these young girls. There are a number of countries that have offered help, and the people at our mission in Abuja will do all they can to work with the relevant authorities.

I want to say, though, that these actions only strengthen our resolve to promote human rights and to stand up against terrorists who want to subjugate the rights of these young girls and women. The terrorists will not win.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the White House released a massive climate change report. The core point is that, "Climate change, once considered an issue for the distant future..." is a clear and present danger. Page after page incontrovertibly connects catastrophic weather events with climate change.

As the first government to kill Kyoto, does the current government still deny climate change?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to take the Liberals seriously when they talk about climate change. Let us take a look at their record and compare it to ours.

Yes, the Liberals signed the Kyoto accord and then they named a dog "Kyoto". That was it. What this government is doing is taking action. With our sector-by-sector regulatory approach, we are seeing a decrease in greenhouse gases by 130 megatons versus what they would have been under the Liberal Party. We are working with our partners and we are accomplishing this without the Liberal and NDP \$20-billion carbon tax.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been 23 days since 276 girls were kidnapped and disappeared in Nigeria. Recently, eight more were taken. Each day they are missing, these young women are at risk.

Oral Questions

The Nigerian vice-president has pleaded with Canada for surveillance technology and other security equipment. My question is for the minister. Is the government providing the requested equipment? And what other specific and immediate measures is Canada helping Nigeria with to ensure these girls are returned to safety?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously this causes us great concern. We have offered support to the Nigerian government. If Canada has surveillance equipment, and it is not in the region, that could provide assistance to help find these young girls, we would be pleased to provide it and the technical expertise to operate that equipment. The Nigerians have our full support. What we do have a concern with is that we will not hand over military equipment unless we can send the Canadians who can properly operate it.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are absolutely appalled by the kidnapping of these young Nigerian girls and the unimaginable horror that they and their families must endure. They want Canada to take action and bring the girls home. Can the minister tell us what kind of assistance he will give the Nigerian authorities to ensure that these young girls are returned to their families and these kidnappings are stopped?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of International Development, has already offered Canada's support and that of all our agencies and departments for efforts to help these young girls. We are prepared to provide assistance and equipment that can best help to find these young girls.

* * *

• (1505)

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, prescription drugs are an important part of our health and well-being, but constituents of mine are concerned about a rising tide of misuse, either by intention or by accident, which can cause serious harm to individuals and to our communities. There have been town halls and round table discussions that have brought together educators, doctors, and pharmacists. Can the Minister of Health update us on what the government's recent steps are to combat prescription drug abuse?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, prescription drug abuse, especially among teenagers, is an issue of increasing concern. Unused prescriptions can accumulate in our medicine cabinets, raising the risk of a child taking them by mistake or teenagers using them to get high.

Today, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Chief of Police Mark Mander, and I have promoted the second annual prescription drug drop-off day. We are asking all parents and grandparents to go into their medicine cabinets and drop off any unused prescription drugs at their closest police station, Shoppers Drug Mart, or any pharmacy. It will literally save lives.

[Translation]

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Memramcook Institute, formerly the Collège Saint-Joseph, is a historic institution in Acadia and an important economic driver for the Memramcook region.

Residents have good reason to be concerned following the bankruptcy and hasty sale of this historic institution.

Considering the fact that the provincial Conservatives chose to abandon the institute, is the minister of ACOA ready to support of the people of Memramcook and try to save this historic institution, which is important to Acadia as a whole?

[English]

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the Memramcook Institute is a provincially owned asset and as such decisions on its future are rightly made by the province.

ACOA evaluates all applications based on their merits, and no such application has been received.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration gave no warning when he cut funding for the Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area's program for teaching French to immigrants. Newcomers must now go to the community college, which is far from downtown and does not cover day care services.

We already knew that the Conservatives did not care about protecting French, but the minister has now shown us that he really could not care less.

Why does he keep trying to prevent our francophone communities from developing?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our record in this area, as we have increased funding for these programs across the country.

Francophone immigration is obviously one of our priorities. We are aiming for 4% francophone immigration outside Quebec in the coming years, starting with New Brunswick, with Moncton and Acadia.

Points of Order

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all have a role to play to make sure that our children are safe. Whether it is from criminals, drug dealers, or even schoolyard bullies, our Conservative government is helping to make Canada safer for our young people.

As today is the national day to end bullying, could the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please update this House on what we are doing to address bullying?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Mississauga South for her question on a very serious issue for Canadians, especially young Canadians. We want to commend the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and CIBC for a great initiative that draws attention to the serious issue of bullying.

[Translation]

Our government is creating initiatives such as “Stop Hating Online”, known as “*Non à la cyberintimidation*” in French, to punish people for distributing intimate images without consent and to promote awareness among young people. Young people are reacting very well and are working to combat cyberbullying.

[English]

I strongly encourage all Canadians, especially young Canadians, to act and speak out against bullying.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Resolute Forest Products is closing its paper mill in Fort Frances after a century of operation, which is a devastating blow for workers, families, and our local economy.

Canada has lost over 134,000 jobs in the forestry sector since the Conservatives came to power; almost 30,000 jobs in northern Ontario alone.

Why have Conservatives stubbornly rejected the NDP's call for a national forestry strategy, rejected a permanent adjustment fund for communities hit by these losses, and rejected greater pension and severance security for all Canadian workers? Why?

• (1510)

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government understands how important forestry is for job creation and economic growth. I am proud that economic action plan 2014 builds on our government's success on this file by focusing on innovation and protecting it from the threat of forest pests. Our focus on diversifying markets for our forest products has increased softwood lumber exports to China tenfold.

These are successes that we should be applauding.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while Ottawa is raking in billions of dollars in surplus on the backs of unemployed workers, just 38.8% of those workers were able to get benefits in 2012 and 2013. That is the lowest rate ever recorded.

What is even more worrisome is that the period covered by the EI monitoring and assessment report still does not allow for a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the Conservatives' most recent reform, which brutally attacks workers in every region. The Quebec National Assembly condemned this reform, which is an all-out attack on Quebec, on two separate occasions.

When will the government once again use the employment insurance program for its true purpose, which is—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Employment and Social Development.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are fulfilling our role. The member is mistaken because the figure he just quoted includes people who voluntarily left their employment and people who worked for only a few weeks, if that.

That is not the number of people who would have been eligible for employment insurance benefits. The program is there to help unemployed workers who worked for the required period of time and who lost their jobs through no fault of their own. We are there to support those workers.

[English]

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

I understand there are a few members with points of order. I will go in the order in which I received the notice.

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on an important point of order coming out of question period today. In a moment I will ask unanimous consent to table, in both official languages, a document related to this point of order.

Over the last couple of months, we have heard very mixed messages about labour shortages: yes, they are acute; no, they are not; yes, our data is accurate; no, it is not. This is why I ask for unanimous consent to table now, in both official languages, the following document: Labour Market Assessment 2014.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Points of Order

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During an answer, the Minister of Employment and Social Development was reading from a document which he referred to as an LMO for Windsor. As the rules prescribe, I would ask that he table that document now.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order arising out of question period regarding comments made in relation to the Right Hon. Beverley McLachlin, Chief Justice of Canada, and the recent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Nadon reference.

I direct the attention of all members of this place to O'Brien and Bosc, at page 616:

Attacks against and censure of judges and courts by Members in debate have always been considered unparliamentary and, consequently, treated as breaches of order...While it is permissible to speak in general terms about the judiciary or to criticize a law, it is inappropriate to criticize or impute motives directed to a specific judge or to criticize a decision made under the law by a judge.

Today we heard a spirited critique from the Prime Minister of the Supreme Court's decision in the Nadon reference, but more important, I remind the House of what the Minister of Justice said on Monday:

Mr. Speaker...my office was contacted by the office of the chief justice. After I spoke with her on that call, I was of the considered opinion that the Prime Minister did not need to take her call.

One thing I can assure the hon. member is that neither the Prime Minister nor I would ever consider calling a judge where that matter is or could be before the court of competent jurisdiction.

As Acting Speaker McClelland noted on April 1, 1998, and found at pages 5653 of the *Debates*:

This is a longstanding tradition in our Parliament that we be cautious when we attack individuals or groups, particularly in the judiciary, and those who are unable to come in here and have the same right of free expression as we enjoy with impunity here.

A similar sentiment comes from Acting Speaker Thibeault, on June 9, 1998, wherein she said:

All Speakers of the House have always considered references to magistrates and tribunals unparliamentary when they took the form of a personal attack or blame.

I will therefore ask the hon. member to choose his words carefully and to be careful about attacking the court.

I realize the government may say that this is an issue of parsing words and that its comments are neither blame nor critique. If that is the case, I certainly invite those members to clarify the record lest the impression remain that there is any allegation of wrongdoing on the part of the Chief Justice. However, that still does not solve whether or not the comments were proper in this place.

As Erskine May's *Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 24th edition notes, at page 396:

Certain matters cannot be debated except on a substantive motion which allows a distinct decision of the House. These include the conduct of...persons holding the position of a judge...Such matters cannot, therefore, be raised by way of an amendment, or an adjournment motion. For the same reason, no charge of a personal character in respect of these categories of person can be raised except on a direct and substantive motion.

This is the key line regarding question period, "No statement of that kind can be...included in reply to a question".

Previous Speakers have voiced their concern about this practice, finding "comments about the judiciary are out of order". That is at page 13354 of the *Debates*, of May 16, 1986, and that "...I am certainly not satisfied with that approach on the appointment of a judge", regarding a question a member put on September 19, 1991, found at page 2401 of the *Debates*.

I think my point has been sufficiently made though I must draw the attention of the Chair to a decision of then Speaker Rodolphe Lemieux, dating to February 18, 1926. He said, on page 1106 of the *Debates*:

Under the rules of the House:

All references to judges and courts of justice and to personages of high official station of the nature of personal attack and censure have always been considered unparliamentary.

I would also call the attention of the hon. member to paragraph 234 (i) under rule 19, which says that a member must not:

...cast reflections upon the conduct of judges of superior courts unless such conduct is based upon a substantive motion.

• (1515)

This idea also forms expression in Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules & Forms* of the House of Commons of Canada, fourth edition, wherein it is written:

The proper course for persons who feel called upon to attack the conduct of a judge is to proceed by way of a petition in which all the allegations are specifically stated so that the person accused may have full opportunity to answer the charges presented against him.

What we have seen from the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister are attacks on the judiciary and a sitting judge, comments imputing motives and maligning the reputation of a person who is not only not able to defend herself in this place, but whose sterling reputation is not even a matter open for debate.

Rather than parse words and dance around this issue, I ask the ministers responsible to withdraw any references made regarding the chief justice that might even remotely cast aspersions upon her conduct.

While you, Mr. Speaker, would be right to find the minister's comments have been unparliamentary and should be withdrawn, I would suggest for the members in question that rather than seek to defend such comments as permissible exercises, they should seek to clarify any misconceptions that the public may have gleaned from the debate as, indeed, the words we use not only are important as regards the traditions and practices of this place, but echo and resonate across the country to an attentive public.

In short, the government should apologize to the House for its comments that are unparliamentary, likewise apologize to the chief justice, and, similarly, to Canadians for their audacious behaviour that unwarrantedly brings the judiciary into disrepute.

I would ask all members to join me in congratulating the chief justice on recently beginning the 25th year on the court and for serving all Canadians with great distinction, as we hope she will continue to do for years to come.

Routine Proceedings

● (1520)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened very attentively to the hon. member, the justice critic for the Liberal Party, and I was waiting with great anticipation for the point in his presentation when he used actual words that could be attributed to me, and I invite the Speaker, as I know he will, to review *Hansard*, that would in any way fit the description, which he and others in this place have attributed to comments made by myself or the Prime Minister, that would be categorized as an unprecedented attack, impugning character, imparting motives. That is simply not true. His characterization, similarly, is untrue and unsupported by words that could be attributed to me or found anywhere in *Hansard*.

On the subject matter, it was not the government that raised this issue in question period. We were responding to questions and, in fact, I would describe them as allegations thrown at myself, the Prime Minister and the government. With respect to not re-arguing or reopening the case, the Leader of the Opposition in particular, in his ever haughty and helpful way, went on to lecture that somehow I and others should have known that the Supreme Court case itself was, to use his language and the language of others, a matter that was unquestionable, that was clear, that was, as some said, well known in legal circles, that an appointment of a Federal Court judge from Quebec was prohibited since the 1870s.

Someone should inform two former Supreme Court justices, Judges Binnie and Charron, a current Supreme Court judge, Mr. Moldaver, who dissented, a current Supreme Court judge, Mr. Rothstein, who came via the Federal Court and, in fact, recused himself, other judges who have come that route through the Federal Court, all current and past sitting Federal Court judges from the province of Quebec, who would have had the audacity to put their names forward for consideration. Perhaps most notably, those who should have known that this decision and this case was well decided and known in legal circles would be members of the parliamentary committee, including the hon. member who just spoke, the justice critic for the NDP party, who, it is now well known, would have seen the list and recommended the list that went forward that contained names of Federal Court judges from Quebec who wished to be considered for a Supreme Court appointment.

This is now, obviously, I would suggest for some, the inside of the inside of a making of a baseball for most Canadians, but the reality is that the government, the Prime Minister and myself sought legal advice, received said advice, and acted appropriately. I also note for the record that this entire subject began when a Supreme Court spokesperson released a statement to the press, to which we felt it was incumbent to respond and clarify.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will leave it up to you to look at the exchanges that took place and the comments made by the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister. It is up to you to determine if their remarks were parliamentary or if they broke any rules.

One thing is clear, and I know that once we are outside the House, we are no longer under your authority, but the minister seems to have forgotten one thing. This did not start with the Chief Justice's press release, but it began earlier with a newspaper article that attributed

certain comments to unidentified members from the Conservative benches who seemed to be attacking the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. Those comments were then repeated by the Prime Minister and the minister, without specifying a timeline. The chief justice felt it was important to make that correction.

I agree with those who say that this is an unfortunate incident in our Canadian democracy. I know that, every time the minister rises in the House, knowing full well that we are bound by confidentiality, he suggests things. He very nearly gives me the impression that he is relieving me of my duty of confidentiality concerning what might have happened. However, he was not part of the committee, so I do not expect him to know all of the facts about that.

That being said, regardless of what might have happened, perhaps the Chair should restore a sense of order following this incident. Our democracy is held up by a number of pillars, one of which is the Supreme Court of Canada. The separation of powers is extremely important. As lawyers—and I believe my colleague, the Minister of Justice, is a lawyer, just like me—we are required to ensure that we do not tarnish the administration of justice in Canada. Perhaps it is time for everyone to take a deep breath and respect the work we all do, particularly the unimpeachable work of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada.

● (1525)

[English]

The Speaker: I thank hon. members for their contributions and I will examine what was said Monday, yesterday, and today and come back to the House with a decision, if necessary.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[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)(b) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 50 petitions.

I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1620)

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

During the taking of the vote:

The Speaker: Order. I just want to say to hon. members that one or two bows are sufficient. We do not need a whole display while members are standing. Once they have stood and their names have been recorded, there is no need to continue standing.

(Division No. 112)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinoooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Devolin
Dreeschen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukowski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Sweet
Toet	Trost

Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Uppal
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 142

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Ayala
Bélangier	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Fortin
Freeland	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Péclet	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	St-Denis
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Stoffer
Sitsabaiesan	Thibeault
Stewart	Tremblay
Sullivan	Valériote— 142
Toone	
Turmel	

Nil

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I rise to further add to the point of order raised yesterday by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The Speaker: I will save the member the trouble, because I am ready to rule on that. As I know it is projected to be called imminently, I think he will find that my ruling will probably address anything he might have brought up.

The hon. opposition House leader is rising as well.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, you had notice of this point of order from the member for Toronto—Danforth, and you know the importance of making sure that the information is actually received by your office.

Also, we seem to have a lack of decorum from the other side again in the House. I hope that they will start to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I cannot hear the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster, and I do not think he is finished making his point. I will ask him to resume the floor.

I see the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans, and I will go to him in just a moment.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Toronto—Danforth did provide notice. He did mention yesterday that he would be coming back on this matter. We understand your ruling is very important, but at the same time, it is important for the member for Toronto—Danforth to make the points that he wanted to make to help to guide the decision that you will making ultimately.

The Speaker: I understand the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster. When he and the member for Toronto—Danforth indicated they would like to return to the House yesterday, I did indicate that they would have to do so forthwith, knowing that the bill was likely to be called very soon.

I can assure the member that I am very confident that this is a comprehensive ruling that will address any concerns that he and the member for Toronto—Danforth may have.

The hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans is rising on a point of order as well.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am raising a point of order, probably a question of privilege that could be tomorrow. I am doing it while the opposition House leader is there.

I notice that the official opposition took their sweet time in voting today. As much as it is their right to behave as they did in the last vote, I want to serve fair warning that tonight—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. When the member for Burnaby—New Westminster was trying to make his point, there was some concern about the lack of decorum. I will ask members now, when the

Speaker's Ruling

member for Ottawa—Orléans is raising a point of order, to show the same respect they were asking for just a few moments before.

The hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, we expect that tonight at six o'clock there will be six votes on private members' business. Each one of these votes will be called. None of them will be applied, and they will typically take seven or eight minutes.

The members of the House, including members of the opposition, know that I never miss a vote. They know that I come here from my hospital bed to vote, and sitting here in a crouched position is sometimes most painful.

Sitting here for seven votes that should take at the utmost 60 minutes I will endure. However, if those members do it at six o'clock the way they did it today, I will have to leave, and if I do, it is because they are infringing on my privilege to vote.

The Speaker: I appreciate the hon. member raising this issue. Of course, the Chair is ever mindful of these types of challenges and will endeavour to do all that I can to ensure an orderly flow of the proceedings later on today and, of course, any other time.

* * *

● (1625)

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Before addressing the selection and grouping of report stage motions for Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts, I would like to address the point of order raised on May 6, 2014, by the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

[English]

I would like to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for raising this matter as well as the Government Leader in the House, the House leader of the official opposition, and the members for Toronto—Danforth, Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, and Winnipeg North for their comments.

The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands raised concerns that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs adopted a motion requiring all remaining questions necessary to dispose of its clause-by-clause consideration of the bill to be put by a specified time, effectively creating a deadline for the debate to end. She argued that this motion contradicts an earlier committee order adopted on October 29, 2013, which gives members from non-recognized parties the ability to speak to their suggested amendments to bills before they are voted on by the committee. Because of the imposed deadline, the member's opportunity to speak to her amendments was interfered with, pursuant to the committee order of October 29, 2013. As such, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands suggested that substantive amendments, even if already voted on by the committee, should be selected for consideration at report stage. Several members rose in support of the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands' point of order.

Government Orders

The government House leader made two central points in response. First, he reminded the House that at report stage the Speaker's authority to select report stage amendments is limited to determining whether they were presented, or could have been presented at committee. Second, he pointed out that the deadline adopted by the committee affected all members the same way, so it is inaccurate to claim that members from unrecognized parties and independents were particularly penalized in this regard.

[Translation]

In examining the matter, it is useful to remind the House of the power of the Speaker to select amendments at report stage. To place the matter in its proper context, it is helpful to refer to the March 21, 2001, statement by Speaker Milliken, found at page 1991 of the *Debates*, which establishes the guidelines upon which I rely to discharge my responsibility to select amendments at report stage. Speaker Milliken was clear in his intent when he urged:

...all members and all parties to avail themselves fully of the opportunity to propose amendments during committee stage so that the report stage can return to the purpose for which it was created, namely for the House to consider the committee report and the work the committee has done...

[English]

These principles are also reflected in the interpretive notes attached to Standing Orders 76(5) and 76.1(5). *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, further expands on these principles, explaining at pages 783 and 784 that:

...the Speaker will normally only select motions in amendment that could not have been presented in committee.

I would remind all members that the guidelines for selection specify whether amendments could have been presented in committee and whether they were defeated in committee. In the case of the committee's consideration of Bill C-23, all members of the committee, as well as any interested independent member, were given the opportunity to present their amendments at committee, and a certain number of these amendments were defeated. The hon. member is now asking the Chair, in exercising its powers of selection, to evaluate whether the consideration afforded such amendments in committee was sufficient.

It is evident that the committee chose to handle its consideration of Bill C-23 in a particular way. A motion setting out the process to be followed was proposed, debated, and ultimately agreed to. Just as the opportunity to present and speak to amendments was decided by way of a committee motion, the deadline by which debate would end likewise was decided by a committee motion. Such decisions are the exclusive responsibility of the committee. I do not believe that it is for the Chair to second-guess how committees choose to manage their business.

● (1630)

The hon. member has asked that I select motions for consideration at report stage because she was not able to debate them in committee. In doing so, she referred to a ruling I gave on December 12, 2012, whereby I noted that I would continue to select motions from independent members at report stage until such time as a satisfactory method was found for them to participate in the clause-by-clause consideration at committee. I understand that the hon. member found unsatisfactory the opportunities afforded to her at the procedure and

House affairs committee in relation to Bill C-23. Other members of the committee echoed they too were not satisfied that certain amendments were not debated once the committee's self-imposed deadline was reached. That said, it remains clear to me that the committee considered and voted on all amendments she is asking me to select.

[Translation]

In 2006, Speaker Milliken dealt with a somewhat analogous situation in relation to Bill C-24, the Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act.

On November 6, 2006, the hon. member for Burnaby-New Westminster raised a point of order regarding the decision of the Standing Committee on International Trade to limit debate and set a strict deadline by which point debate would end.

Though the situation was different insofar as he was a member of the committee concerned, I believe Speaker Milliken's response, found on page 4756 of *Debates*, was instructive:

I do think that committees are masters of their own procedure. They are entitled to make provisions in adopting orders in the committee that govern the way they are going to conduct their business...The committee is allowed to make amendments to the bill. The committee has imposed rules on how those amendments will be dealt with in the committee and how members will be able to address the issues raised by the amendments. It seems to me that [it] is entirely within the jurisdiction of the committee and indeed [it] is [a] quite normal exercise of its powers.

[English]

When the bill was taken up at report stage, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster submitted a large number of the amendments that had been defeated in committee, and asked the Chair to select them on the basis that they had not been debated in committee.

In a ruling I gave as Acting Speaker on November 21, 2006, found on page 5125 of *Debates*, I declined to do so, reminding the House that:

...the Chair selects motions which further amend an amendment adopted by a committee, motions which make consequential changes based on an amendment adopted by a committee and motions which delete a clause.

Aside from this, the Chair is loath to select motions unless a member makes a compelling argument for selection based on the exceptional significance of the amendment.

As far as the Chair is concerned, in keeping with past precedents, I cannot see how the imposition of a deadline for the end of the debate could constitute a justifiable argument for the selection of amendments at report stage that were already presented and defeated in committee.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

FAIR ELECTIONS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-23, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, as reported with amendment from the committee.

Government Orders

●(1635)

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: There are 145 motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of C-23.

[Translation]

Motions Nos. 55, 58, 60, 63, 86, 87, 90, 92 to 95 and 100 will not be selected by the Chair because they were defeated in committee.

[English]

All remaining motions have been examined and the Chair is satisfied that they meet the guidelines expressed in the note in Standing Order 76.1(5) regarding the selection of motions in amendment at the report stage.

Motions Nos. 1 to 54, 56, 57, 61, 62, 64 to 85, 88, 89, 91, 96 to 99, and 101 to 145 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[Translation]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 54, 56, 57, 61, 62, 64 to 85, 88, 89, 91, 96 to 99 and 101 to 145 to the House.

[English]

Before I do so, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, Infrastructure; the hon. member for Malpeque, National Defence.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 1.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 2.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-23, in Clause 3, be amended by replacing line 17 on page 5 with the following:

“(2) The mandate of the Chief Electoral Officer is renewable once only; however, a person who has served as Chief”

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 4.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-23, in Clause 5, be amended

(a) by replacing line 6 on page 6 with the following:

“Chief Electoral Officer within 20 days after the”

(b) by replacing line 20 on page 6 with the following:

“subsection (5) within 65 days after the day on”

(c) by replacing line 22 on page 6 with the following:

“65-day period coincides or overlaps with the”

(d) by replacing line 25 on page 6 with the following:

“65 days after polling day for that election.”

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-23, in Clause 5, be amended

(a) by replacing line 11 on page 7 with the following:

“Chief Electoral Officer within 20 days after the”

(b) by replacing line 16 on page 7 with the following:

“(4) Within 65 days after the day on which the”

(c) by replacing line 21 on page 7 with the following:

“expiry of that period. However, if the 65-day”

(d) by replacing line 24 on page 7 with the following:

“notice shall be published no later than 65 days”

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-23, in Clause 5.1, be amended by replacing line 35 on page 8 with the following:

“under this Act, including information relating to the commission of an offence against a law of Canada or a province by an individual if, in the Chief Electoral Officer’s opinion, there is evidence of such an offence.”

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 6.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 7.

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-23, in Clause 7, be amended by adding after line 22 on page 9 the following:

“(2) The Advisory Committee of Political Parties, established pursuant to subsection 21.1(1), shall provide the Chief Electoral Officer with its opinion on the impact of this section within two years after the first general election held after the coming into force of this section.”

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-23, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing line 22 on page 9 with the following:

“levels or to any targeted groups.”

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 8.

Motion No. 15

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 10.

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 18.

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 19.

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 20.

Motion No. 19

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 21.

Motion No. 20

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 22.

Motion No. 21

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 25.

●(1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 26.

Motion No. 23

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 30.

[English]

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 24

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 31.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 25

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 32.

Motion No. 26

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 37.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 27

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 39.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP) moved:

Motion No. 28

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 41.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 29

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 43.

[Translation]

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 30

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 48.

Motion No. 31

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 49.

Motion No. 32

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 52.

Motion No. 33

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 53.

Motion No. 34

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 54.

Motion No. 35

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 56.

Motion No. 36

That Bill C-23, in Clause 56, be amended by deleting line 9 on page 32.

Motion No. 37

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 57.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP) moved:

Motion No. 38

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 58.

[Translation]

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 39

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 59.

Motion No. 40

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 62.

Motion No. 41

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 64.

Motion No. 42

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 67.

Motion No. 43

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 67.1.

Motion No. 44

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 69.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 45

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 73.

[Translation]

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 46

That Bill C-23, in Clause 77, be amended by replacing line 11 on page 49 with the following:

“years after the end of the election period, and provide to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission,”

Motion No. 47

That Bill C-23, in Clause 77, be amended by adding after line 20 on page 49 the following:

“348.161 For the purposes of determining the period of time during which each script is to be kept in accordance with section 348.16, the three-year period starts from the last time that the same or substantially similar script is used by the same caller.”

Motion No. 48

That Bill C-23, in Clause 77, be amended by adding after line 20 on page 49 the following:

“348.161 For greater certainty, the requirement referred to in section 348.16 to keep the scripts and recordings described in that section for three years does not preclude the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission from establishing a system of voluntary commitments for calling service providers in which they pledge to keep scripts and recordings for periods longer than three years.”

Motion No. 49

That Bill C-23 be amended by adding after line 27 on page 51 the following:

“351.11 No third party that failed to register shall incur election advertising expenses of a total amount of \$500 or more.”

Motion No. 50

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 80.

Motion No. 51

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 81.

Motion No. 52

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 82.

Motion No. 53

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 83.

Motion No. 54

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 84.

Motion No. 56

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 85.

Motion No. 57

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 86.

Motion No. 61

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 87.

Motion No. 62

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 88.

Motion No. 64

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 89.

Motion No. 65

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 90.

Motion No. 66

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 91.

Motion No. 67

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 92.

Motion No. 68

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 93.

Motion No. 69

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 94.

Motion No. 70

Government Orders

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 94.1.

Motion No. 71

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 95.

Motion No. 72

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 96.

Motion No. 73

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 97.

Motion No. 74

That Bill C-23, in Clause 97, be amended

(a) by replacing line 30 on page 195 with the following:

“(a.1) section 351.1 (registered and non-registered foreign third party ex-”

(b) by replacing line 4 on page 196 with the following:

“(a.1) section 351.1 (registered and non-registered foreign third party ex-”

Motion No. 75

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 98.

Motion No. 76

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 99.

Motion No. 77

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 100.

Motion No. 78

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 101.

Motion No. 79

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 102.

Motion No. 80

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 103.

Motion No. 81

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 104.

Motion No. 82

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 105.

Motion No. 83

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 106.

Motion No. 84

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 107.

Motion No. 85

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 108.

Motion No. 88

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 109.

Motion No. 89

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 110.

Motion No. 91

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 111.

Motion No. 96

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 112.

Motion No. 97

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 113.

Motion No. 98

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 114.

Motion No. 99

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 115.

Motion No. 101

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 116.

Motion No. 102

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 117.

Motion No. 103

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 118.

Motion No. 104

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 119.

Motion No. 105

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 120.

Motion No. 106

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 121.

Motion No. 107

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 122.

Motion No. 108

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 123.

Motion No. 109

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 124.

Motion No. 110

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 125.

Motion No. 111

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 126.

Motion No. 112

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 127.

Motion No. 113

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 128.

Motion No. 114

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 129.

Motion No. 115

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 130.

Motion No. 116

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 131.

Motion No. 117

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 132.

Motion No. 118

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 133.

Motion No. 119

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 134.

Motion No. 120

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 135.

Motion No. 121

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 136.

Motion No. 122

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 137.

Motion No. 123

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 138.

Motion No. 124

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 139.

Motion No. 125

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 140.

Motion No. 126

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 141.

Motion No. 127

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 142.

Motion No. 128

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 143.

Motion No. 129

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 144.

Motion No. 130

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 145.

Motion No. 131

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 146.

Motion No. 132

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 147.

Motion No. 133

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 148.

Motion No. 134

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 149.

Motion No. 135

Government Orders

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 150.
Motion No. 136

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 151.
Motion No. 137

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 152.
Motion No. 138

That Bill C-23, in Clause 152, be amended by adding after line 11 on page 242 the following:

“(1.2) The report shall also include any concerns regarding the powers granted to the Commissioner by the Canada Elections Act.”

Motion No. 139

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 153.

Motion No. 140

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 154.

Motion No. 141

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 155.

Motion No. 142

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 156.

Motion No. 143

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 157.

Motion No. 144

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Clause 158.

Motion No. 145

That Bill C-23 be amended by deleting Schedule 1.

• (1705)

[*English*]

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are at report stage on Bill C-23, and it has been a long odyssey to this point; one of considerable resistance to the bill on the part of the official opposition; many sectors of Canadian society, including organizations who have engaged in the fight, academics and so on; and also, we suspect, considerable pushback from some Conservatives who themselves felt the pressure from the opposition and civil society.

It is worth recapping how we came to be where we are at.

In March 2012, the NDP tabled a motion, which then received unanimous support from everybody in the House, to call on the government to table within six months—that is, by September 2012—a bill that would address the issue of prevention of prosecution of fraudulent election calls and also add to the powers of Elections Canada, including the power of the Chief Electoral Officer to require receipts and documentation for national parties' election expenses, which, believe it or not, currently the Chief Electoral Officer does not have access to.

Well, six months later, by September 2012, a bill with that sort of focus to clearly deal with this kind of fraud and the need to enhance the powers of Elections Canada to investigate had never appeared.

By October, it was clear the government was not dealing with the priority it had promised to deal with in voting for the motion in March 2012, and so I tabled a private member's bill with a proposed, and I would say very minimal, system of voter contact registry to deal with fraudulent election calls, as well as a couple of provisions that also went to beefing up the penalties for that kind of fraud.

I told the minister at the time, which is prior to the current minister, that this was effectively to just prod the government and also help it to begin thinking about this issue, because it was clearly

having trouble meeting its deadline. I said that I was available to consult as needed and also that I expected that the government, with its resources, it would be able to come up with an even more effective system.

Well, by April 2013, we still had not seen a bill, despite any number of times I stood in this House and asked when we might.

Suddenly the former minister announced to all, in a highly organized press conference on a Tuesday in April, that he would be tabling the missing bill two days later, on a Thursday. The next day we heard rumours, which were confirmed on that Thursday, that this announced bill would not be tabled after all. We will never know exactly what revolt occurred in the Conservative caucus to lead to that result, but we do know that there was a revolt, and the then-minister was replaced with the current minister shortly thereafter.

We had to wait almost a full year after that event, to March of this year, for the bill to finally be tabled, two years after the March 2012 motion when the government had agreed that it would be tabling a bill within six months and 18 months after that deadline passed.

All that time was spent coming up with a bill that we have dubbed “the unfair elections act”, which explains why the first motion at this report stage is to delete the title of the bill, which the government has called “the fair elections act”. We can think of no more Orwellian a title. The government has come close to titles that were equally unrepresentative of the actual contents of bills in the past, but this one, frankly, takes the cake.

• (1710)

The fact of the matter is that the bill was tabled and within 18 hours, as the critic for democratic reform, I had to be on my feet, having read, analyzed, and formed first views on a 242-page bill to reply to the minister at the start of second reading.

Within very short order, the House leader was on his feet and gave notice of time allocation; time allocation came very quickly thereafter, and very little debate on second reading was permitted.

We then went into the committee stage, where there was an effort on the part of the official opposition, the NDP, to convince the procedure and House affairs committee to allow for hearings across the country in order to hear what Canadians thought. My colleague from Hamilton Centre put on a strong filibuster in order to convey to the government how serious we were about this, but ultimately, after 10 hours, he had to concede that the arguments had not penetrated the brick wall.

We went on in committee to have 71 witnesses, only one of whom was completely in support of the bill. It was one out of 71. Most of the others were critical of large swaths of the bill, and where they were focusing only on one or two things, they were extremely critical of what it would do. They included the Chief Electoral Officer, the Commissioner of Canada Elections, the previous chief electoral officer and commissioner, the former auditor general, and indeed Preston Manning, and the list goes on.

Government Orders

Then we found ourselves in a clause-by-clause process that ended up having an artificial end date. We had 10 hours of clause by clause, and by the time the guillotine came down at five o'clock last Thursday, we had gotten through only one-fifth of the 242 pages in the bill, one-half of the bill in terms of the clauses, and only half of the opposition amendments. In terms of the amendments that had actually been debated and, after clause-by-clause study, voted on, not a single official opposition amendment was voted in favour of by the government. This was a total farce of a process.

We looked, in a constructive spirit, at the government amendments, voted for those that made sense, tried to amend as it made sense, came up with some proposals that we thought were absolutely impeccable from the government's perspective, and the Conservative members still decided not to vote with us.

For example, when it was clear that the government was not going to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to authorize the use of voter information cards as a second piece of identification, when it was clear that we had lost that fight, we tabled an amendment simply saying that the Chief Electoral Officer had to ensure that the voter information cards were prominently marked with a message to say that this card cannot be used for purposes of identification on voting day, something that was designed to prevent chaos that might occur in 2015 because of the hundreds of thousands who were able to use VICs in 2011. It was the simplest of amendments and the most constructive of amendments.

The government had an entire night to reflect on it, because the amendment was moved at two minutes before closing hour the day before. The government members took overnight, came back, and said they were sorry, they could not vote for that. This was the atmosphere that we worked in.

It has to be said that the efforts of the official opposition and civil society resistance produced some major accomplishments in terms of the government standing down. The fundraising exception that was criticized across the country was removed. The central poll supervisor provision that would allow the first place party in the last election to appoint central poll supervisors was also removed.

Vouching for addresses was restored in the bill because of the pressure that we put on. Retention of documents—some documents, in any case—under the voter contact registry went from one year to three years. Public education by Elections Canada was now permitted for students in schools, even though for everybody else it remains prohibited, and we at least got on record, although the government refused to put this in text in the amendments, that the Chief Electoral Officer will be permitted to communicate freely on any subject that he wishes.

●(1715)

These are major accomplishments, and everyone in Canadian society who pushed back with this effort to resist this attack on our democracy, as Sheila Fraser called it, deserves credit for that.

Nonetheless, the remaining issues in the bill are huge. The bill is much worse than the current Canada Elections Act. For that reason, we will be voting against the bill and seeking, as much as possible, to move at report stage the few remaining amendments that are available to us as the official opposition.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know I will be afforded the opportunity to speak to the bill very shortly, but I wanted to get on the record as quickly as possible on the whole issue of process.

It is really important that we recognize that the bill is nothing more than a Conservative piece of legislation for which there is no evidence of any form of genuine consultation beyond members of the Conservative caucus, and from what I understand, not even all members of the Conservative caucus were involved. It is in essence being pushed out, from my best guess, from the Prime Minister's Office.

The Conservatives call it the fair elections act, but it is far from fair. Given the importance of the legislation and democracy here in Canada, would the hon. member not agree that when we change an election law it should be based on consensus and that professional advice should have been sought from organizations such as Elections Canada?

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, I would actually like to decline to answer a question on the fairness of democratic process from that member, considering the role the Liberal Party is currently playing in completely undermining all fair process in the Board of Internal Economy and the procedure and House affairs committee.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as time ticks down, this may be my only chance to speak to the bill at report stage.

I want to thank the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth and the official opposition for standing so clearly with the rights of smaller parties and independents and our ability to speak at report stage and submit substantive amendments when those rights were not respected in the committee process, through no fault of our own.

My question for the member is this: as parliamentarians who love this place and love Westminster parliamentary democracy, what can we do as we watch it consistently reduced, stomped upon, abused, and held in contempt? At what point do we find our way to drive the point home that we are losing democracy in our country?

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, I share and appreciate the passion of the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands on this point. Over the next year, it is incumbent on all of us not to allow the Canadian public to forget what the bill is all about and what the struggle to at least make it less terrible than it was when it started was all about.

Indeed, we cannot afford to have another government in power that acts the way this government does. Apart from reminding Canadians of what the vote will mean in 2015, Canadians also have to join with the NDP and the Green Party in making sure we change the electoral system to a system that embraces proportional representation so that this kind of government, elected with less than 40% of the vote but with more than 50% of the seats, can never again do what it is doing to this institution.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank my colleague who is working very hard on this file.

I had the opportunity to study the bill with him in committee. I would like him to provide a brief overview of everything that is still missing in this bill. For example, we did not have the time in committee to debate clauses and amendments concerning all the different things that will affect the Commissioner of Canada Elections, who investigates electoral fraud. There are a number of things missing with respect to the commissioner's powers.

Could he tell us about that and the different things that are still missing from this bill, which make it unacceptable at present for our Parliament?

• (1720)

[English]

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, whose work I deeply appreciate and with whom it is always a pleasure to work. I will answer in English in order to make this as specific as possible.

It is indeed the case that the Commissioner of Canada Elections is transferred over to the Attorney General's office under the Director of Public Prosecutions. We had no chance to debate that. We had no chance to debate the issue that the Commissioner of Canada Elections would now be dismissible, for cause, by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The fact that the voter information cards remain banned is something that we did not succeed on. The fact that the Chief Electoral Officer cannot have access to party receipts for campaigns and the situation with judicial orders to compel witnesses to cooperate in investigations were also not changed.

As well, public education broadly, beyond students and schools, remains banned, and audio recordings, audio scripts, and phone numbers not only do not have to be conveyed to the CRTC but do not even have to be kept.

These are just a few of the problems that remain in the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate, I see the hon. government House leader is rising on a point.

BILL C-23—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after committee filibusters, points of order, today's spectacle of slow voting and, of course, 145 report stage amendments being presented, it is not surprising that I must advise that an agreement has not been reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) concerning the proceedings at report stage and third reading of Bill C-23, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other acts and to make consequential amendments to certain acts. Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at those stages.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The House appreciates such notice.

I will let the hon. member for Winnipeg North know that we have approximately eight minutes remaining in the time for government orders this afternoon. Of course, he will have whatever he does not use of his remaining time when the House next resumes debate on the question.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

REPORT STAGE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is most interesting that the government House leader chooses this time to stand in his place, when we just get back for report stage a bill that would make fundamental changes to our election laws, to invoke closure, notice of time allocation, which is closure. It is shameful the way the government has used time allocation to get through its legislative agenda. It is time allocation that takes away the ability of members of Parliament to provide due diligence and provide opinions on important legislation.

It is not that it is offending individuals such as myself as much as it is Canadians as a whole. I have a responsibility to represent thousands of people in Winnipeg North, and collectively, we represent Canadians all across this land. We are charged with the responsibility to stand in our place and debate legislation. This government, more than any other government in the history of Canada, has used time allocation as a way to prevent members of Parliament from standing in their places to deal with important legislation.

Ironically, this afternoon we are talking about election laws. That is one of the fundamental pillars of our society. Democracy, freedom, rule of law, all of these are very important. In a couple of days we will be paying tribute to our veterans. Why do they go abroad, whether it is World War II, or World War I, or Korea or Afghanistan on peace missions and so forth, and why do we request our military personnel, both today and in the past, to do this? It is to defend our beliefs. Our fundamental freedoms and democracy are important to Canada, to all Canadians.

This is important legislation and the government continues to use its Conservative majority to abuse rights and thereby Canadians in the passage of this legislation. The legislation is fundamentally flawed and should not be passed. The government failed to recognize the need for change.

The government has ignored the advice of Elections Canada's Chief Electoral Officer, former CEOs. In committee we had presentations from individuals like Sheila Fraser. For the first time ever, we had letters that had been signed by 100-plus political scientists from coast to coast in regard to the way in which the government was changing our election laws. It is wrong.

There is a need for the government, when it changes an election law, to build on a consensus, not the tyranny of a majority to force changes to election laws to fit its needs. That is what we see today a continuation of an abusive majority government that does not recognize the important role we have inside the House of Commons to ensure that the laws we pass are done in due course.

This law does nothing to give the strength, in which Elections Canada and the commissioner wanted, to address the issues that Canadians want addressed. I am referring specifically to the ability to compel witnesses. We have been arguing for this, but more important, Canadians, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Commissioner for Elections Canada want the ability to compel witnesses. It is not something completely unique in federal departments.

• (1725)

More important, from my perspective, there are some provincial entities in Canada of an equivalent nature. Elections Manitoba, for example, already has the ability to compel. Why is the ability to compel so critically important? Just take a look at 2011, whether it is the robo-calling, the over-expenditures, thousands of inquiries were made from Canadians from all across this land about issues related to the last federal election.

We need to do what we can to restore public confidence in our election laws at a time when there is a great need to build public confidence based on the last election and the cheating and voter suppression that took place. The way in which to do that is to bring in a law that will have some teeth.

I was there when the Chief Electoral Officer and the commissioner made their presentations. Canada's election law is getting weaker as a result of the government's failure to address that need in itself.

We have challenged the government to allow for a free vote inside the House of Commons on this bill. We want a free vote on this because we believe that ultimately there might be some Conservatives who believe in democracy more so than the Conservative Party and the attitude in which the government has had toward our election laws. We wanted our committee to travel across Canada to different regions, and the government shut that down.

The government did not want to go through a genuine debate on amendments. That is why it put in a deadline of May 1, when we saw amendment after amendment being voted on without discussion or debate because the Conservative majority used its majority to prevent that debate from occurring. There was not one amendment that the government passed that was in opposition, unless we take into consideration that it had the same amendment and it was only because the opposition beat it in its submission of it, so it made it a higher priority. The government did not make the amendments that were necessary to make the bill in the best interest of Canada overall.

The government needs to recognize that we have to do more than just change laws based on time allocation and understand and appreciate that there is a process. The Conservative majority government has been abusing its authority in a number of ways. I would suggest that very few are as offensive as what we have before us today. We have a majority government that, without any consensus or genuine consultation, brought in legislation that would change the rules in the next federal election and has failed in building any sort of support.

Everyone who came before committee expressed concern and acknowledged the need for change. Because the government did a bit of tweaking here and there does not justify the disenfranchising that has taken place, the division and the taking out of Elections

Government Orders

Canada the Office of the Commissioner, the inability to compel the witnesses, the silencing of Elections Canada—

• (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. We have allowed the hon. member for Winnipeg North to finish through his full 10 minutes. However, he will have five minutes for questions and comments when the House next returns to business, should he wish it.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION — TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

The House resumed from May 6, 2014, consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:32 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

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

(Division No. 113)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Chicoine	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguié	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)

Private Members' Business

Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriotte — 129

Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turnel

Ritz
Seeback
Shiple
Smith
Sorenson
Strahl
Toet
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Trost
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 146

PAIRED

Nil

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
James
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Nicholson
Obhrai
Oliver
Opitz
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards

Adler
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Fantino
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

The House resumed from April 30 consideration of Bill C-479, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (fairness for victims), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-479 under private members' business.

The question is on Motion No. 1.

● (1825)

[*English*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 114*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Albas
Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Angus
Ashfield
Aspin
Aubin
Baird
Bélanger
Benskin
Bernier
Bezan
Blanchette-Lamothe
Block
Borg
Boulerice
Brahmi
Breitkreuz
Brousseau
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge

Adler
Albrecht
Allen (Welland)
Allison
Ambrose
Andrews
Armstrong
Ashton
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bateman
Benoit
Bergen
Bevington
Blanchette
Blaney
Boivin
Boughen
Boutin-Sweet
Braid
Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt

Private Members' Business

Byrne	Calandra	Raynault	Regan
Calkins	Cannan	Reid	Rempel
Carmichael	Caron	Richards	Rickford
Carrie	Casey	Ritz	Rousseau
Chicoine	Chisu	Saganash	Sandhu
Chong	Choquette	Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Christopherson	Clarke	Scott	Seeback
Cleary	Clement	Sellah	Sgro
Comartin	Côté	Shea	Shipley
Cotler	Crockatt	Shory	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Crowder	Cullen	sor)	
Cuzner	Daniel	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver East)	Smith	Sopuck
Day	Dechert	Sorenson	Stanton
Devolin	Dewar	St-Denis	Stoffer
Dion	Dionne Labelle	Strahl	Sullivan
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre	Sweet	Thibeault
Dreeshen	Dubé	Toet	Toone
Dubourg	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Tremblay	Trost
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Trudeau	Truppe
Dusseault	Dykstra	Turmel	Uppal
Easter	Eyking	Valcourt	Valerioté
Falk	Fantino	Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Vellacott	Wallace
Fletcher	Fortin	Warawa	Warkentin
Freeland	Freeman	Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Fry	Galipeau	Sky Country)	
Gallant	Garneau	Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Garrison	Genest	Williamson	Wong
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère	Woodworth	Yelich
Gill	Glover	Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Godin	Goguen	Zimmer— 275	
Goodale	Goodyear		
Gosal	Gourde		
Gravelle	Grewal		
Groguhé	Harper	Nil	
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)		
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn		
Hayes	Hiebert	Nil	
Hillyer	Hoback		
Holder	Hsu		
Hughes	Hyer		
Jacob	James		
Jones	Julian		
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)		
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)		
Kerr	Komarnicki		
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lamoureux		
Lapointe	Larose		
Latendresse	Lauzon		
Laverdière	Lebel		
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)		
Leef	Leitch		
Lemieux	Leslie		
Leung	Liu		
Lizon	Lobb		
Lukivski	Lunney		
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)		
MacKenzie	Maguire		
Mai	Martin		
Masse	Mathysen		
May	McCallum		
McColeman	McGuinty		
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod		
Menegakis	Merrifield		
Michaud	Miller		
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Fundy Royal)		
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)		
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)		
Mourani	Mulcair		
Murray	Nantel		
Nicholls	Nicholson		
Norlock	Nunez-Melo		
Obhrai	O'Connor		
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon		
Opitz	O'Toole		
Pacetti	Papillon		
Patry	Payne	Ablonczy	Adler
Péclet	Pilon	Albas	Albrecht
Plamondon	Poilievre	Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Preston	Quach	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Rafferty	Raitt	Ambler	Ambrose
Rajotte	Rankin	Anders	Andrews
Rathgeber	Ravignat	Angus	Armstrong
		Ashfield	Ashton

NAYS

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 carried.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

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

(Division No. 115)

YEAS

Members

Private Members' Business

● (1840)

[English]

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

(Division No. 116)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Chicoine	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turmel
Valeriote — 129	

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Falk	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hoback	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Sweet
Toet	Trost
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 144

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Private Members' Business

* * *

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House resumed from May 2 consideration of Bill C-483, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (escorted temporary absence), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in Bill C-483 at report stage under private members' business.

● (1845)

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

*(Division No. 117)***YEAS**

Members

Abлонczy	Adler
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Ashfield	Ashton
Aspin	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Baird	Bateman
Bélangier	Benoit
Benskin	Bergen
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Borg	Boughen
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brosseau	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Byrne	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Caron
Carrie	Casey
Chicoine	Chisu
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Cleary	Clement
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crockatt
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dechert	Devolin
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dreeschen
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Falk
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Garrison

Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Groguhé
Harper	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	James
Jones	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Lauzon
Laverdière	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mai	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Michaud
Miller	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nicholls
Nicholson	Norlock
Nunez-Melo	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Payne	Péclet
Pilon	Plamondon
Poilievre	Preston
Quach	Rafferty
Raitt	Rajotte
Rankin	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Scott
Seeback	Sellah
Sgro	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Stoffer	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Toet
Toone	Tremblay
Trost	Trudeau
Truppe	Turmel
Uppal	Valcourt
Valeriote	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth

Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 274

NAYS

Members

May — 1

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

● (1850)

[Translation]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

The House resumed from May 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-567, An Act to amend the Access to Information Act (transparency and duty to document), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-567 under private members' business.

● (1855)

[English]

The Speaker: The hon. Chief Government Whip is rising on a point of order.

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I think the member for Calgary Centre was counted on both votes. We need clarification.

● (1900)

The Speaker: The Chief Government Whip is a step ahead of me. I was just about to do that very thing.

Can the hon. member for Calgary Centre clarify for the House which way she intended to vote?

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, I intended to oppose.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I am a little too late, but I just wanted to stand and say that as critic for democratic reform, I was going to vouch for her.

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

(Division No. 118)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Chicoine
Choquette

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélangier
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Byrne
Casey
Chong
Christopherson

Cleary
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Fortin
Freeman
Gameau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Julian
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Masse
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turmel
Williamson — 133

Private Members' Business

Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau
Eyking
Freeland
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Hyer
Jones
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Plamondon
Rafferty
Rathgeber
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
St-Denis
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Dreeschen
Dykstra
Fantino

Adler
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)

Private Members' Business

Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hoback	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lauzon
Lebel	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Raith
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Strahl
Sweet	Toet
Trost	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	Wilks
Weston (Saint John)	Woodworth
Wong	Young (Oakville)
Yelich	Zimmer — 142
Young (Vancouver South)	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

HOMELESSNESS

The House resumed from May 6 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 455 under private members' business.

● (1910)

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

(Division No. 119)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Ashfield	Ashton

Aspin	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Baird	Bateman
Bélanger	Benoit
Benskin	Bergen
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Borg	Boughen
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brosseau	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Byrne	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Caron
Carrie	Casey
Chicoine	Chisu
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Cleary	Clement
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crockett
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dechert	Devolin
Dewar	Dion
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dreeshen	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Falk	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Freeland
Freeman	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Groguié
Harper	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
James	Jones
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kellway
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Lauzon	Laverdière
Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leslie	Leung
Liu	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mai
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Michaud
Miller	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Murray

Adjournment Proceedings

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked a question in the House about why the Conservative government was cutting infrastructure funding next year. The answer was that despite the Prime Minister's claims, the economy was not his top priority. The main thing the Prime Minister is focused on is being able to go into the next election and say that he has eliminated the very deficit that he created in 2008 in order to gain votes.

Because of this, important federal investments are being delayed until after the next election. This is in spite of the fact that action now would generate economic growth and help middle-class families. We saw this when the Prime Minister delayed, for two years, his recently announced funding to help first nations children's education. That is a tremendously important investment when fewer than four in ten young aboriginal students even graduate from high school if they live on reserve.

However, Mr. Harper felt that was not as important as his balanced budget target date. Therefore, the funding does not flow until after the next election.

The new Building Canada fund is no different. It is a 10-year plan, which Liberals were happy to see, but it is heavily back end loaded and extremely light on funding until after the next election. In fact, for the next two years, the fund will have only \$210 million of new funding a year. If we compare this with the old Building Canada fund commitment for 2013-14, which was \$1.7 billion, this has been an 87% cut and it will not be back to last year's level until 2019. That puts projects like the Broadway corridor expansion of SkyTrain at risk.

Mayor Gregor Robertson of Vancouver held a press conference this week to say that the Broadway corridor expansion of SkyTrain must go forward. However, the federal share of this investment may be delayed many years due to the delay in funding for infrastructure by the Conservative government.

Liberal Party members recently passed a resolution calling for major infrastructure investments of up to 1% of GDP. They understand how critically important infrastructure investment is.

UBC generates more than \$10 billion in economic activity annually, but the bus-clogged Broadway corridor that goes right through my riding of Vancouver Quadra, is a major impediment to investment in the corridor, according to a KPMG report written recently. A new SkyTrain link from Broadway to Commercial would connect jobs and innovation centres in metro Vancouver, making this one of Canada's most important infrastructure and economic corridors.

As Mayor Gregor Robertson recently said:

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| Nantel | Nicholls |
| Nicholson | Norlock |
| Nunez-Melo | Obhrai |
| O'Connor | Oliver |
| O'Neill Gordon | Opitz |
| O'Toole | Pacetti |
| Papillon | Payne |
| Péclet | Pilon |
| Poilievre | Preston |
| Quach | Rafferty |
| Raitt | Rajotte |
| Rankin | Rathgeber |
| Ravignat | Raynault |
| Regan | Reid |
| Rempel | Richards |
| Rickford | Ritz |
| Rousseau | Saganash |
| Sandhu | Scarpaleggia |
| Schellenberger | Scott |
| Seeback | Sellah |
| Sgro | Shea |
| Shiple | Shory |
| Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor) | |
| Sims (Newton—North Delta) | |
| Sitsabaiesan | Smith |
| Sopuck | Sorenson |
| Stanton | St-Denis |
| Stoffer | Strahl |
| Sullivan | Sweet |
| Thibeault | Toet |
| Toone | Tremblay |
| Trost | Trudeau |
| Truppe | Turmel |
| Uppal | Valcourt |
| Valeriot | Van Kesteren |
| Van Loan | Vellacott |
| Wallace | Warawa |
| Warkentin | Watson |
| Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country) | |
| Weston (Saint John) | |
| Wilks | Williamson |
| Wong | Woodworth |
| Yelich | Young (Oakville) |
| Young (Vancouver South) | Zimmer— 268 |

NAYS

Members

- | | |
|--------------|-------|
| Fortin | Hyer |
| May | Patry |
| Plamondon— 5 | |

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the delay, there will be no private members' business hour today. Accordingly, the order will be rescheduled for another sitting.

I have received notice from the hon. member for Calgary West that he is unable to move his motion during private members' hour on Thursday, May 8, 2014. It has not been possible to arrange an exchange of positions in the order of precedence.

Accordingly, I am directing that tomorrow the table officers drop that item of business to the bottom of the order of precedence. Private members' hour will thus be cancelled tomorrow and the House will continue with the business before it prior to private members' hour.

Adjournment Proceedings

We will see companies from all over the world coming to Vancouver if there's good connectivity....The cities we compete with globally in technology are well-connected and are invested in rapid transit, and we need to keep pace. So it will have a nationally significant economic impact.

This expansion just makes good sense. In the short run, the Broadway corridor rapid transit project will create jobs, jobs in construction, transportation and manufacturing. In the long run, public transit in the Broadway corridor will improve the quality of life and of our air, reduce traffic gridlock and stress, shorten commute times and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. It will increase our productivity and make Canada a more attractive place to invest.

All we need to do is look at the economic benefits of our life sciences and innovation clusters along the Broadway corridor and the important post-secondary institutions, like UBC in Vancouver Quadra, to know that if we act now, we can realize more benefits for greater Vancouver, British Columbia and Canada. Starving the Building Canada fund is not the way to do this.

The Speaker: I just want to remind the member for Vancouver Quadra not to use proper names, but to refer to each other by our riding names or titles.

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is proud to make strategic investments in infrastructure that contribute to economic growth, job creation, a cleaner environment and strong, prosperous communities.

The investments by our government have been unprecedented, beginning first with the historic Building Canada plan in 2007, which invested \$33 billion over seven years, followed by the economic action plan in 2009, which invested an additional \$14 billion in infrastructure and housing to boost our economy at the time.

A significant portion of this funding has gone to support public transit in cities across the country. Since 2006, we have committed over \$7 billion in direct funding to public transit infrastructure across the country. In addition to this, during the same period, Canadian municipalities have used over \$2 billion of their federal gas tax fund allocations toward transit investments.

Five of Canada's largest cities, being Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa, Calgary and Edmonton, have directed most of their federal gas tax fund allocations to the public transit category.

Following on these record investments, our government worked with provinces, territories and municipalities to develop a long-term plan to invest in public infrastructure. As a result of these efforts, this Conservative government delivered the new Building Canada plan, which provides \$53 billion for provincial, territorial and municipal infrastructure over a 10 year period. This includes \$47 billion in new funding through: the \$32.2 billion community improvement fund that supports municipal infrastructure across the country, such as roads, transit, water and waste water systems, and recreational and cultural facilities; the \$14 billion new Building Canada fund to support provincial, territorial and municipal infrastructure projects of national, regional and local significance, including public transit; and the renewed P3 Canada fund, with \$1.25 billion to support

innovative ways to invest in infrastructure projects, providing better value for taxpayer money through public-private partnerships.

Our government launched the new Building Canada fund on schedule, in fact, ahead of schedule by a few days, on March 28. We are also concluding renewed agreements with provinces and territories for the gas tax fund, which we have extended, doubled, made permanent and now indexed at 2% per year, ensuring municipalities have the certainty they need to plan and invest in their infrastructure priorities.

Finally, \$6 billion from existing infrastructure programs continues to support public infrastructure.

In conclusion, our government remains committed to working with the provinces, territories and municipalities as we continue to make record investments in public transit that support job creation, economic growth and a high quality of life for Canadians in every community across Canada.

With respect to the member's home province of British Columbia, I am pleased to inform the House that the province will receive almost \$4 billion in dedicated federal funding over the next decade.

• (1915)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, nothing in the response tests my assertion, which is that this funding is dropping 87% this year and next year over last year. It is not until 2019 that the funding level will return to what it was last year, so this is years of delay in critical infrastructure.

I note the member is praising the benefits of the gas tax fund, and I would agree with that. This is a program initiated by a previous Liberal government and it was the right thing to do.

He also praises investment in rapid transit. Just to make a point of comparison, the \$500 million that was spent for the Canada line to the airport, a very important federal investment, was actually approved and budgeted by a previous Liberal government. That is \$500 million for one—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, the member's assertions are incorrect. This federal government will be investing in average of over \$5 billion per year in infrastructure over the next decade. This is part of our \$53 billion investment through the new building Canada plan.

Adjournment Proceedings

This funding will support provincial, territorial and municipal infrastructure across the country, including roads, public transit, water, recreation and cultural infrastructure. Over 70% of new funding under the plan is dedicated specifically to municipalities for municipal infrastructure priorities, and this record investment in public infrastructure will build upon the \$7 billion our government has already provided for public transit in cities across the country and will support job creation, economic growth and help to enhance a high quality of life for Canadians in every community across Canada.

• (1920)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question I asked in February remains as important today as it was when asked. The use of CSEC to intercept some passengers transiting our major airports for WiFi communications or any other communications constitutes a form of unwarranted surveillance.

I also referenced the 2012-13 annual report of the CSE commissioner, whose mandate is to provide oversight of CSE. In that report, at page 20, the commissioner stated the following with respect to the issue of whether CSE was operating within the law as the minister claims it did in response to my question on February 3. The commissioner stated:

I had no concern with respect to the majority of the CSEC activities...However, a small number of records suggested the possibility that some activities may have been directed at Canadians, contrary to law...I was unable to reach a definitive conclusion about compliance or non-compliance with the law.

It is interesting that the Minister of National Defence has failed to address this situation, which flatly contradicts the statement he made to the House on February 3. He said at that point, that report, meaning the 2012-13 report, referring to the commissioner, highlighted that all reviewed CSEC activities were authorized and carried out in accordance with the law. As I just quoted, the commissioner actually said “contrary to law”.

What the minister said is factually wrong. I hope the minister or the parliamentary secretary will correct that misleading statement this evening.

In testimony before the Senate National Security and Defence Committee on February 3, the chief of CSEC, John Foster, stated that CSEC was “specifically required to protect the privacy of Canadians”. However, he also stated that given the nature in the cyber and telecommunications environment, CSEC “may risk the incidental interception of private communications of Canadians”. How often that occurs was not elaborated on. However, Mr. Foster did make a statement that was of concern, and it goes to the heart of the question I asked the Minister of National Defence on February 3. Did the minister, under the provisions of section 273.65 of the National Defence Act, give any authorization to CSEC to conduct surveillance operations which could result in the monitoring of communications of Canadians within Canada or of individuals transiting our country?

Given these revelations and the fact the Minister of Public Safety just this week admitted that the agencies under his mandate were in fact involved in telecommunications surveillance in excess of 1.2 million times in a single year, I have to ask the minister to be clear.

Did the minister authorize the surveillance of Canadians under section 273.65 of the National Defence Act?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to take this opportunity to once again assure all Canadians who are concerned about the activities of the Communications Security Establishment Canada that CSEC's activities are lawful, they are independently reviewed, and they serve to protect Canadians from foreign threats.

The House has engaged in a full debate on this matter, including debating a motion tabled by the member for Malpeque for a full day back in February. The Minister of National Defence and the chief of CSEC have also appeared before the Senate committee and the House committee on national defence to outline how CSEC makes invaluable contributions to the safety of Canadians as well as a continued commitment to lawfulness and privacy.

The key facts continue to remain unchanged. CSEC operates within all Canadian laws, including the National Defence Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Criminal Code, and the Privacy Act. CSEC is also subject to legislative measures to protect the privacy of Canadians and persons in Canada. By law, CSEC cannot direct its foreign intelligence activities at Canadians, whether they are at home or abroad, or at any person in Canada, and it cannot target Canadians indirectly if it is prohibited from doing it directly, which means it cannot use any of the Five Eyes partners to do any of that work.

CSEC may lawfully assist federal law enforcement and security agencies under their legal authorities, such as applicable court warrants.

CSEC has an effective and independent review body. The CSE Commissioner, an esteemed retired supernumerary judge, reviews all the agency's activities. The commissioner does not take direction from the government or from CSEC, and his office is independently funded by its own budgetary appropriation from Parliament. In order to review the agency's activities, the commissioner is supported by expert staff and external consultants and has full access to CSEC staff, records, and systems.

The commissioner has never found CSEC to have acted unlawfully. In fact, he has specifically noted CSEC's culture of lawful compliance and genuine concern for protecting the privacy of Canadians. Further, multiple commissioners now, all highly qualified judges, have reviewed CSEC's metadata activities. These reviews concluded that its activities are in compliance with the law and subject to comprehensive and satisfactory measures to protect the privacy of all Canadians.

As the current commissioner, Jean-Pierre Plouffe, has noted in his public statements, he is fully aware of CSEC's metadata activities and has the full co-operation of the agency in his review activities.

Business of Supply

These are the basic facts, the same as they have been since the member's last request for an adjournment debate back in January. Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight that CSEC's foreign intelligence activities are critical to the ongoing protection of Canadians and Canada's interests. CSEC plays an essential role in protecting our country and our citizens from threats such as terrorism, hostage takers, cyberthreats, and foreign espionage. The work of this agency has revealed plots to attack Canadians and allied personnel overseas before these plans could be executed. CSEC has also helped reveal foreign-led efforts to radicalize and train individuals to carry out attacks here in Canada.

In Afghanistan, CSEC's operations were critical in assisting in the protection of our brave men and women in uniform from insurgents. Each and every day, the dedicated men and women working in the Communications Security Establishment work in obscurity and silence to help ensure our nation's prosperity, security, and stability.

• (1925)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, there were not a lot of answers to the question I asked.

Nobody is questioning the need for CSEC in security matters. What we are questioning is whether Canadians are in effect being spied on. We have the issue of CSEC, which used metadata at airports, which we are talking about tonight. We have the admission now of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness that the RCMP, CSIS, and the Canada Border Services Agency were, in fact, involved in the gathering of information in those 1.2 million requests that the Privacy Commissioner released. We also know that earlier in the year, the Canada Border Services Agency was involved in about 1,800 requests. Is it being done illegally?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member that it is not. I can tell the member for Malpeque and all Canadians who are watching that CSEC has to act within the law. Even when it is assisting the RCMP and CSIS with any of those activities, it has to go through the proper court orders in respect to legislation to ensure that Canadians' rights are protected.

Let me say it one more time: CSEC acts within the law. The commissioner and his staff are independent, and they do robust review and oversight of the commission.

• (1930)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn and the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to study all votes related to Transport in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015.

I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

TRANSPORT—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2014–15

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Transport in the main estimates, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I would like to open this committee of the whole session by making a short statement on this evening's proceedings.

Tonight's debate is being held under Standing Order 81(4)(a), which provides for each of two sets of estimates selected by the Leader of the Opposition to be considered in committee of the whole for up to four hours.

The debate is also held under the provisions of the order made on Tuesday, May 6, 2014. Tonight's debate is a general one on all of the votes related to Transport. Each member will be allocated 15 minutes. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government and the Liberal Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation.

As provided in an order made on Tuesday, May 6, 2014, parties may use each 15-minute slot for speeches or for questions and answers by one or more of their members. In the case of speeches, members of the party to which the period is allotted may speak one after the other. The Chair would appreciate it if the first member speaking in each slot would indicate how his or her time will be used, particularly if it is to be shared.

[Translation]

When the time is to be used for questions and answers, the Chair will expect that the minister's response will reflect approximately the time taken by the question, since this time will be counted in the time originally allotted to the parties.

Though members may speak more than once, the Chair will generally try to ensure that all members wishing to speak are heard before inviting members to speak again, while respecting the proportional party rotations for speakers.

Members need not be in their own seats to be recognized.

[English]

Finally, I would remind hon. members that according to the order made May 6, during this evening's debate, no quorum calls, dilatory motions, or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

As your Chair, I am guided by the rules of the committee of the whole and by the order made on Tuesday, May 6, 2014. However, in the interests of a full exchange, I am prepared to exercise discretion and flexibility in the application of these rules.

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole, ministers and members should be referred to by their titles or riding names, and of course, all remarks should be addressed through the Chair.

I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all established standards of decorum, parliamentary language, and behaviour. At the conclusion of tonight's debate, the committee will rise. The estimates related to Transport will be deemed reported, and the House will adjourn immediately until tomorrow.

• (1935)

[Translation]

We may now begin tonight's session. The House, in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(a), the first appointed day, consideration in committee of the whole of all votes related to Transport in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015.

The floor is open.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to take a moment to publicly wish the Minister of Transport a happy birthday. After that, I stop playing nice.

Here is my first question: Between 1995 and 2012, how many years was Canada Post profitable for?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have the corporate plan for Canada Post, but of course, Canada Post is an independent crown corporation and as a third party, is arm's length from us.

We do know that since 2006, there have been 1.2 billion fewer pieces of domestic letter mail delivered. That is why Canada Post has embarked upon this change.

If the member would like to have further information with respect to profitability, we can provide those back years. However, I can tell the member that with respect to this year, Canada Post in 2013 had a loss of \$269 million—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: As I explained in the opening, normally the responses by the minister will be around the same time as the time used to pose the question.

Having said that, and for some of the members who have been through this process before, if the question compels a particularly complex response but the questioner takes only several seconds, clearly time must be permitted for the minister to respond to the essential tenets of the question that was put.

However, generally speaking, whatever time was taken by the questioner, one should try their best to fashion their response in the same time the questioner took.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, my question was simple and it should have had a very short answer. The answer was actually 17 years. My colleague did not need two minutes for her answer.

Canada Post has posted a profit 17 out of the past 18 years. The only loss posted in that period was in 2011.

What was the largest one-time expense that Canada Post incurred that year?

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, on the topic of profit or loss in the operations of Canada Post, as I said, I have in front of me the annual report. It indicates that while there was a profit in operations in 2009 and 2010, there was not in 2011, 2012, or 2013. There was a loss of \$226 million in 2011, \$106 million in 2012, and \$193 million in 2013 from operations.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, once again, the minister is not answering the question.

The only one-time expense in 2011 was the pay equity settlement that took 31 years to materialize. I imagine that the minister agrees with the pay equity settlement. Canada Post would have turned a profit in 2011 without this expense.

Does the Minister of Transport agree with Deepak Chopra, Canada Post's CEO? He believes that the end of home delivery will benefit seniors because it will force them to go outside and get some exercise—Is that her opinion as well?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, clearly Canada Post has in place ways to deal with people who have special needs when it comes to the delivery of mail. It does that currently and will do that in the future, as well, when we move the five million homes that currently receive their mail at the door to where they will receive it in a community mailbox.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, what I gather is that the minister agrees with Canada Post. It is going to create a new dependency for tens of thousands of seniors and people with reduced mobility. In fact, they are going to have to rely on people to go and get their mail. We are going to be the first G7 country that will be unable to provide home delivery. We must provide home delivery.

I have a very specific question for the minister. In major urban centres such as Montreal, Vancouver or Toronto, where will these community mailboxes be installed? Will they be installed on sidewalks or in parks?

• (1940)

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, Canada Post has indicated that it will be working with each community on where to site these community mailboxes.

As I said before, two-thirds of delivery in this country is already going to these types of mailboxes or mailboxes that are not directly door-to-door service delivery.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, two-thirds of Canadians get mail delivered to their door. They will lose that service if we agree to the Conservative government's measures.

The minister did not answer my question. Where will these community mailboxes be located in major urban centres? Nobody knows.

Business of Supply

Does Canada Post plan to expropriate municipalities to acquire the public space it needs to install these huge, hideous boxes?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, Canada Post has indicated that it will work with the communities with respect to the siting of these mailboxes.

Regardless of what the hon. member says about their esthetic value, the fact remains that they will have delivery of mail in those new mailboxes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, 58 Canadian municipalities, including the largest ones, have passed resolutions opposing Canada Post's service cuts. We would like to know what the minister will do to ensure people's safety, particularly with respect to identity theft, with huge community mailboxes in big cities such as Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, Canada Post has indicated that it is vital for it to convert to community mailboxes in order to shore up against the loss of letter mail it has been experiencing.

As a result, it has undergone a consultation process in 46 communities across Canada. It has answered those questions to those communities with respect to the concerns that the hon. member raises.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, more municipalities oppose the Canada Post cuts than were consulted by Canada Post. That is pretty unbelievable.

According to a study by the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association, 1,500 rural postal outlets have disappeared in the past 30 years. In most provinces, when a town loses its postal outlet, people have to drive between 12 and 13 kilometres to get to one. Does that make sense for people who do not have a car? People who live in rural areas are furious.

Why cut their services yet again by reducing business hours and the number of outlets that provide services?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, there are a number of items in there that I would like to correct. It is not just a very simple correction that is needed.

First, with respect to Canada Post's five-point action plan that it has embarked on, it has consulted across the country. Canadians have said that they want a postal system they can count on to meet their changing needs, but they also expect it to avoid becoming a drain on their tax dollars.

With respect to the year in review and the service levels that have been achieved by Canada Post, I think it is also important to note that this is the government that put in place the charter that was going to be used in order to measure the ability of Canada Post to respond to what Canadians want and need.

The charter standard was met as follows: 98.8% of Canadian population live within 15 kilometres of a postal outlet; 90.7% live within 5 kilometres; 79.3% live within 2.5 kilometres.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, unfortunately, the Conservatives have abandoned the rural communities that rely on these postal outlets. The outlets were not only part of the community's economic development, but also of their identity. They were a meeting place for the people in the village.

For four years, Canada Post looked at options with regard to banking services at Canada Post. The report remained secret. A journalist finally obtained the document and what we find in it is completely ridiculous: 701 out of the 811 pages were deleted or redacted.

This is the business model they propose: blank pages. These are the business models for postal services. These are the findings. The entire document is full of pages like that.

I would like to know whether the minister intends to make the report public. It seems the report finds in favour of having banking services at Canada Post outlets. Why keep that a secret? Why can we not access the information?

● (1945)

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, in coming to developing their five-point plan, this is what Canada Post has said:

Our challenge was to put forward a plan that balances the needs of all Canadians, while addressing the legacy costs of a system built mainly to process and deliver a large volume of mail. [...]

It's the result of two years of analyzing all options, including those at post offices around the world, to determine what would work best for Canadians. We're streamlining our operations, addressing the cost of labour, adjusting our pricing to better reflect today's environment, expanding convenience through franchise post offices and moving the remaining five million door-to-door customers to community mailbox delivery.

That is Canada Post's plan and that is what we stand by.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, it is hard for us to know what the best service would be for Canada Post when the government refuses to give us information on their serious study.

Can the minister tell us whether or not Canada Post has ever offered banking services in this country?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, Canada Post used to offer postal banking services, as the hon. member knows, until approximately 1967.

We have excellent banking facilities in this country and they are institutes to be proud of around the world. As a result, they are in there.

Primarily, we should also remember one other thing. The world of banking is moving to electronic banking as well, which is exactly the problem we are facing with respect to letter mail.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, how many Canadians do not have a bank account?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I cannot find that in my estimates.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, 900,000 Canadians do not have bank accounts. Canada Post has 6,400 postal outlets. These people would be able to get banking services rather than cashing their cheques at Insta-Cheques, which takes a large portion of their money.

I would like to know whether the Post Office Savings Bank Regulations are still part of Canadian legislation.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, Canada Post is an independent crown corporation. It has determined its best path forward. For two years, it has analyzed and looked at all of the options, including postal banking, and it has determined that that is not the path forward for the Canadian solution. Therefore, we accept its advice.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, we accept their advice, but we have no idea what their argument is because they have not revealed anything about their study on banking services.

In most industrialized countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, Italy and Japan, postal outlets offer banking services. Even New Zealand created the Kiwibank in 2002 and it now generates 70% of New Zealand's postal service profits.

Why would we be unable to do it when the rest of the world can? Are we not as smart as other countries?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, obviously that is not the case. The case is this: Canada Post has reviewed all of the options in the report and it has adopted this five-point plan, and that is the one that we are supporting as government.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, the Conservative government is therefore supporting Canada Post's plan without providing us with any evidence, any argument or any study to show us why we would not be able to offer banking services, when that is the route most OECD countries are taking.

According to a discussion paper of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, banking revenues in many countries are actually essential to generate profits from their postal networks.

Are the Conservative government and Canada Post refusing to offer banking services at Canada Post outlets because they want to kill the public service that is Canada Post?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, that is absolutely false.

Canada Post has had a long and proud history of serving Canadians. This government is standing by Canada Post in its

journey toward ensuring that it returns to self-sufficiency and is not a drain on taxpayers.

It was this government that put in place performance standards for Canada Post and it is this government that has been holding the line on a rural moratorium.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, which municipalities will be the next to be affected by cuts to home delivery?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, all addresses in urban, rural, and remote locations that currently have door-to-door service, five million of them, will be moved to community mailboxes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, Canada Post is a crown corporation. It could therefore take advantage of others' expertise to be able to offer basic banking services that would work, that would generate income and that would likely generate higher profits for Canada Post. For example, we have the Bank of Canada, the Business Development Bank of Canada, Farm Credit Canada, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Export Development Canada and the Canada savings bond program.

Why not do something that works elsewhere in the world and that the government stubbornly refuses to try?

• (1950)

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, Canada Post has developed its plan to move forward as a result of the loss of letter mail that we have been seeing as a result of modernization in our world, the move to the digital era.

As well, Canada Post has indicated that its five-point plan is the best mix for a Canadian solution and we encourage it in the development and the continuation of implementing this plan.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Chair, I will move on to rail safety and the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic. I would like the minister to tell us how much the municipality of Lac-Mégantic had to pay to clean up its downtown, since insurance could not pay and the rail company refused to do so.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, there are two things on that. With respect to the insurance that was available, our government took strong action with respect to that; and had indicated in the Speech from the Throne that, going forward, we expect that the polluter will pay. It is very unfortunate that there was not enough insurance in this case, but as the Prime Minister indicated at the time, he stands with the people of Lac-Mégantic and he will be supporting them.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Transport.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the kind wishes of the hon. member at the beginning, and I appreciate the tough questions he posed. They were very good.

Business of Supply

I am pleased to appear before the committee of the whole this evening as part of its review of the votes relating to Transport in the 2014–15 main estimates, but as well to take this opportunity to highlight some of the key priorities that our government is addressing.

First, I will move to the estimates.

The authorities that we are seeking for the 2014–15 main estimates will be directed to support several key priorities within my department. We will continue to refine and strengthen safety and security oversight of the transportation system. We will continue to contribute to our government's responsible resource development agenda, and we will improve Canada's competitiveness in critical transportation infrastructure. We will ensure that Transport Canada policies, programs, and activities meet the needs of the transportation system in the long term, and we will adopt our government's efficiency and renewal measures.

I will focus the rest of my opening remarks on our efforts to address a few key areas: tanker safety; investments in transportation infrastructures as part of our gateways and corridors strategy; and, of course, rail safety.

First, I will talk about tanker safety and, specifically, what we are doing to strengthen our tanker safety regime. In the main estimates, members will note that we are requesting additional authorities in the amounts of \$15.8 million for world-class oil spill response. This is a 686% increase from the authorities that were sought in last year's main estimates. The tanker safety regime is based on three pillars: first, we prevent spills from happening in the first place; second, we clean them up should they happen; third, we hold polluters accountable and financially responsible for those spills. This regime introduced new measures such as increased inspections of foreign tankers in Canadian waters, expanded air surveillance and monitoring of ships in our waters, and a new incident command system to allow the Canadian Coast Guard to respond more effectively to incidents.

To help achieve a world-class tanker safety system, we struck an independent expert panel led by Captain Gordon Houston, the former CEO of Port Metro Vancouver. The panel submitted its first report in November and it made 45 recommendations on how to strengthen the oil spill preparedness and response regime. We take this advice very seriously. Therefore, we are engaging communities and first nations, the marine industry, and provincial governments on the panel's recommendations. However, the panel's work does continue. It is currently reviewing oil tanker safety measures in the Arctic, as well as marine transport of hazardous and noxious substances. I do expect to receive its second report and its final report later this year.

Recently when I was in British Columbia, I was able to be on board one of the planes operated by our national aerial surveillance program, or NASP. It was quite an experience because I had the opportunity to appreciate not only the importance of the efforts but also the excitement of the members of the crew in their everyday work, because they are working hard on a world-class tanker safety regime. We are going to double the funding for this aerial surveillance program, and that is going to allow this team to increase the number of hours the planes are in the air, and then they

can better monitor our coasts and ultimately deter potential polluters, and catch a spill before it becomes too big.

Economic action plan 2014 recognizes the importance of trade and investment to Canada's economic future, and the role of Canada's transportation infrastructure network in supporting trade in domestic and international markets. Through the main estimates, we are seeking \$702 million to support important infrastructure projects through the gateways and corridors funding program. The program supports international trade with the United States and other key partners by ensuring integrated and efficient transportation systems across all modes. We have to work with other levels of government and private-sector stakeholders, and together we are both investing in important infrastructure products at border crossings and bolstering our efforts to coordinate infrastructure planning as part of government's beyond the border initiative. Improvements to cross-border trade will go a long way toward ensuring continued economic growth for Canada.

Finally, I would like to turn my attention to what my top priority is, and that is strengthening rail safety in this country.

• (1955)

This past January, the Transportation Safety Board released three interim recommendations regarding its ongoing investigation into the Lac-Mégantic train derailment. The recommendations addressed three factors: the vulnerabilities of the DOT-111 tank cars used to transport crude oil, the need for emergency response assistance plans, or ERAPs, along routes where large volumes of liquid hydrocarbons are shipped, and the requirement for route planning and analysis for trains carrying dangerous goods.

On April 23, we provided our response and we outlined our actions going forward to directly and decisively address these recommendations. The Government of Canada is committed to continued collaboration with industry, other levels of government, and various stakeholders.

Well before the events at Lac-Mégantic, rail safety issues were already being addressed by our government. In May of last year, amendments to the Railway Safety Act came into force that strengthen the safety requirements for rail companies in Canada.

As well, we have worked for years to maintain safety for pedestrians and vehicles around grade crossings. New safety regulations were recently published, and this year the federal government's grade crossing improvement program is providing more \$9 million to improve safety at over 600 railway crossings in this country.

I also feel strongly in this case that Canadians should not be expected to cover the costs of damages. To this end, Transport Canada has consulted stakeholders on how to strengthen the existing liability and compensation regime for rail. This way, in the event of an accident, sufficient resources would be available to adequately compensate victims, pay for cleanup costs, and protect taxpayer funds. This complements recent consultations by the Canadian Transportation Agency into the insurance coverage it requires of federally regulated railway companies when they issue certificates of fitness to the companies.

When it comes to addressing the recommendations from the Transportation Safety Board, I want to stress that we are committed to improving railway safety and the transportation of dangerous goods by rail.

Following the accident in Lac-Mégantic, the federal government took immediate action. The measures I announced in April build upon this work and further strengthen our country's regulation and oversight of rail safety in the transportation of dangerous goods. I will just remind the House of these measures.

We first acted to remove the least crash-resistant DOT-111 tank cars from dangerous goods service in general by directing the phase-out of tank cars that have no continuous reinforcement of their bottom shell. There are about 5,000 of these cars in North America.

We are also improving the tank cars that are used to transport crude oil or ethanol to significantly reduce the risk of these substances escaping if the cars are involved in an accident. In January of this year, Transport Canada published a revised mandatory standard for consultation, requiring thicker steel, head shields, and top-fitting protection. All DOT-111 tank cars that do not meet this January 2014 standard must be phased out or refitted within three years if they are to be used for the transportation of crude oil or ethanol.

We will also implement even more stringent tank car requirements in the future, based upon industry recommendations and technical discussions that are ongoing with the United States. In fact, Canada is already committed to meeting or exceeding all U.S. requirements for DOT-111 tank cars.

The second Transportation Safety Board recommendation that we are addressing is in relation to emergency response assistance plans. These are formal plans that describe what industry will do to support first responders in the event of an accident involving dangerous goods that require special expertise and response equipment.

To ensure we are prepared in the event of a rail accident, the federal government will require rail shippers to develop emergency response plans for higher-risk flammable liquids. In the event of an accident involving significant quantities of these dangerous goods, approved response plans will give first responders access in a timely manner to the resources and the assistance that they need. To accomplish this, we have issued a direction to require shippers to develop emergency response assistance plans for crude oil, gasoline, diesel, aviation fuel, and ethanol when even a single tank car is loaded with one of these designated flammable liquids.

We will also establish a task force with key partners and stakeholders such as the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs and the

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Aboriginal Firefighters' Association as well as key response, shipping, and railway representatives. This task force will provide a dedicated and collaborative forum to enhance coordination of response capability. We will also consider expanding response plan requirements for other class 3 flammable liquids after reviewing the matter with this task force.

Finally, Canada already has a strong regulatory regime for trains travelling in both rural and urban areas. Transport Canada has now introduced even stricter requirements for trains transporting dangerous goods in order to safeguard communities along our railway lines.

● (2000)

We issued an emergency directive requiring railway companies to immediately slow trains that transport dangerous goods and implement other key operating practices that respond to the TSB's recommendations. The emergency directive adapts the recently announced U.S. voluntary requirements to the Canadian rail network, requiring companies to make key operational changes quickly.

We will make these requirements permanent by issuing a ministerial order that requires railway companies transporting dangerous goods to develop new rules on these operating practices. It is a major undertaking that requires careful planning in order to deliver rapid and concrete results.

In conclusion, the initiatives I have outlined today demonstrate clearly how our government is working to maintain transportation in Canada that is safe, secure, efficient, and environmentally responsible, and we take this responsibility seriously.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to begin my comments by wishing the minister a happy birthday, although I find the way she decides to celebrate it passing strange. However, maybe a little later in the evening she will.

I would like to talk a little about Canada Post, acknowledging at the outset that it is an arm's-length crown corporation.

First, let us deal with the financial situation in Canada Post. It is undeniable that the business of delivering mail has evolved at a remarkable rate, especially with the incredible popularity of electronic mail. However, whether we talk about individuals, businesses, or governments, everyone—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order, please. I call to the attention of the hon. member that we are actually on 15 minutes for the minister, and we were entering the last part of her 15 minutes on questions. I am thinking that perhaps the hon. member might think we are going on to the next speech. We are on questions, and we have almost three minutes left.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

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Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is a pleasure to ask a question of the minister. In reviewing the independent Transportation Safety Board's statistics over the last few years with respect to rail occurrences, two of the most persistent areas for difficulties remain trespasser and crossing accidents, including fatalities.

I note that the estimates are seeking funding for improvements to grade crossings, and there is also a particular notation for funding for Operation Lifesaver. I wonder if the minister could comment on both of these expenditures and the importance of investments to reduce the incidence of both trespassing and accidents at rail grade crossings.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, those are two areas we do want to make sure we shed some light on.

With respect to grade crossings, we have a fund available to help with making changes at grade crossings, as I referred to in my remarks already. We also have a program to close grade crossings, either private or public, that are no longer needed. We contribute to that as well. There are about 5,000 of these in the country.

With respect to Operation Lifesaver, it is absolutely worth taking time to talk about a great group of people who work together to ensure that we are communicating with kids, with families, and with communities about the importance of safety around rail. In fact, last week was rail safety week, and Operation Lifesaver has done a great job tweeting out information to people to make sure they have rail safety at the forefront of their minds.

In March of this year, I was able to host a round table dealing specifically with the issues associated with higher density in certain urban areas and pedestrian fatalities as a result of accidents with rail. We brought together the main railways: GO Transit, VIA, CN, and CP. We also brought into the room a mom who lost her son. Those kinds of conversations are important in reminding ourselves that we should continuously talk about not just the transportation of dangerous goods but also the fact that we do have this interaction with pedestrians in communities and that we should continuously do all we can to ensure their safety.

As one last thing, this is also national occupational health and safety week, so it is an important time to think about those things as well.

● (2005)

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Wascana this evening in this first round.

I will begin by asking the minister exactly how many qualified inspectors there are at Transport Canada to conduct safety management system audits.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, the information that I have with respect to inspector oversight positions in general are the following: for civil aviation, we have approximately 1,700 total number of positions; in marine safety, we have 595 positions; in rail safety, we have 204 positions; in the transportation of dangerous goods, we have 127 positions. These are oversight safety positions.

Of course, some of these modes do not operate on the basis of SMS, but the particular breakdown I have is about who is involved in general with respect to management of safety and oversight activities. Those are the numbers I have.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, that is actually quite astonishing. I guess the minister did not understand my question, because the Auditor General of Canada says in the Auditor General's audit, which was performed some six or seven months ago, that Transport Canada says it requires 20 system auditors to audit each railway SMS, for example, once every three years.

How many qualified system auditors are on staff presently? In his report, the Auditor General says there are 10 when the department says it needs 20, minimum.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, in general, we have approximately 100 inspectors within the rail safety sector. We also talk about oversight on top of that, and those are the numbers that I gave.

With respect to the number of audits in a typical year, there are approximately four to five audits completed. It varies from year to year, because sometimes regulatory compliance is confirmed through oversight activities, such as inspections.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, I am not asking the minister in general. I am asking her specifically, and here is why.

I asked the department, when it came to committee, to give us information. It says it has 142 full-time equivalents assigned to rail safety oversight. We sent this answer to the Auditor General of Canada, and here is what the Auditor General of Canada wrote back to me a week ago:

...we cannot provide any level of assurance on the information recently provided by Transport Canada officials. The Department does not specify how many qualified inspectors it currently has available to conduct audits.

I ask once again. Exactly how many qualified inspectors does Transport Canada have to conduct audits?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: By spring of 2014, Mr. Chair, all inspectors and managers who require training to become SMS auditors will have received the appropriate training. The total number will be 100.

Mr. David McGuinty: How many, Mr. Chair?

● (2010)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: One hundred, Mr. Chair.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, there are 100 qualified systems auditors today?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, there are exactly 100 trained and qualified today?

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Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, just to expand for a second, as the hon. member knows, the Auditor General made some recommendations, and my department put together a going-forward plan, a management action plan, on how to deal with this. I have been updated, most recently in preparation for today, with respect to where we are in the plan, and I can say that with respect to that issue of ensuring that inspectors and managers receive training in a timely manner, I have been informed by officials that by spring of 2014, all 100 inspectors and managers who require training to become SMS auditors will have received the appropriate training.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, has the minister read the recent survey of aviation inspectors who work for Transport Canada?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: I have not, Mr. Chair.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that 85% of inspectors believe that air travellers have been exposed to higher risk as a result of Transport Canada's aviation SMS, up significantly from 2007, when 67% forecast this outcome?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I know that SMS can be a contentious topic for people who do not necessarily believe in the system, but I can say who does believe in the system, and that is the chair of the Transportation Safety Board. She has clearly said that SMS systems are the way to go for the future, and that is the direction we have gone in.

She specifically said that SMS is a powerful, internationally recognized management tool to help organizations find trouble before trouble finds them, and indeed aviation accidents in Canada have decreased by 25% in the last decade and are now at an all-time low.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, when the minister announced that DOT cars would be phased out within three years, what analysis, data, or evidence did she rely on to be able to ascertain whether those cars could be replaced or manufactured on time?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, first, we struck an advisory group coming out of the transportation of dangerous goods advisory committee, and it provided a report at the end of January 2014.

With that report, consultations took place with industry through my officials, and that is where the development of this standard came from and that is where the development of this data came from, and we are comfortable with this.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, I am not sure how the minister can be comfortable when we heard testimony at committee from the largest train car manufacturer in Canada who said it would be impossible to achieve this replacement rate within three years.

Why did the minister issue a regulation, set a standard, which she knew could not be achieved?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, the underlying assertion of fact is incorrect. I do not knowingly think that this is impossible. In fact, I think it is quite possible, and that is exactly why we introduced this standard, based upon good information that was provided to me by officials.

At the end of the day, we are trying to get to the right place for rail safety in this country. We know that these companies can absolutely meet three years, and if they cannot, they will be telling it to us as we go through with developing standards.

Today in the United States, the secretary of transport made the same kind of analysis, that they do not want to be using these cars at all for the purposes of transporting, so we are on the same page on this. We want safer communities and safer rail travel.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, if the minister wants safer communities and safer rail systems, why is her government spending more money on economic action plan advertising every year than on rail safety?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to rail safety, this government has spent over \$100 million in extra funding in rail safety for the past number of years since 2009. We started in 2007 with respect to doing a study on what was needed for rail safety, and we acted on it by putting the money behind it. This is what the department indicated was needed: \$72 million over five years plus and an extra \$15 million in operating funds. Those are the numbers that are needed in order to carry out what we are doing in rail safety.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am glad to have this opportunity to question the minister. I must say that in response to the last exchange, it certainly does stand out that the government is spending close to \$100 million on rail safety and close to \$600 million on tax-paid government advertising.

I would like to take the minister to Bill C-30, the issue of grain transportation in western Canada and the horrendous backlog of grain transport this last year. The industry is forecasting, and indeed, I think the minister herself used this number, that the carry-forward at the end of this particular crop year will be something in the order of 23 million tonnes that was grown last year but was unable to be shipped because the grain handling and transportation system failed so badly. If that is the carry-over on top of even a normal crop in western Canada this summer, the industry will be facing much the same challenge this year as it faced last year. It will be a huge problem for a great many farmers.

Will the government ensure that the system, which failed last year, will not fail this coming year, that it is ready to cope with that volume and that it is ready to cope with other exigencies, like difficult weather conditions? Will farmers have that assurance?

● (2015)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, that is exactly why we have introduced Bill C-30, and that is why we enjoy the support of all parties on C-30, because we want to get to the right place, and the right place is ensuring that we are moving as much grain as we possibly can.

However, we cannot forget or deny the fact that this has been a bumper crop year. We have seen an increase of over 33% over previous years. We had anticipated there would be a higher carry-out if it continued along at the same level. That is why we found it necessary and important to issue an order to the railway companies to make sure that they are moving a million tonnes of grain a week so that we can move and clear out as much of this backlog as possible.

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Even more important is preplanning. Commencing next year, in coordination with the CTA, I would be, as minister, in the position of being able to discuss and plan at the front end what the crop looks like and how we will accomplish moving the crop. It is something in which we believe very strongly and in which we are taking strong action.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Chair, with respect to that issue of preplanning and dealing with the situation as it exists today, apart from the problem of very low volumes being moved through most of this past year, the second most serious problem has been the unfair treatment of various producers in various shipping corridors under the impact of the order in council. I wonder if the minister could indicate what she is planning to do to make sure that various shippers in various corridors across western Canada are all treated fairly.

For example, one of the most discriminated against areas is the central part of Saskatchewan that wants to move a significant volume of grain south into the United States. However, the railways would prefer to move it east or west, and so they favour Alberta and shippers in Manitoba. The central corridor of Saskatchewan moving south is finding it very difficult to move grain, as well as producer cars and short-line rail operators.

What is the government prepared to do now to ensure equity among those various corridors?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, there are two aspects to this.

We have a commodity supply chain table that Transport Canada is facilitating to have these kinds of discussions about the chains.

We took it very seriously when we set the actual tonnage level that we expected the railways to move. It was done so in contemplation that all corridors would be moved, and the numbers chosen actually reflected that maximum amounts of grain had moved through those corridors on a historical basis. As such, we knew that we would be pushing the railways in terms of how much they could carry, and indeed they have fulfilled their marks we have set out for them.

In moving forward, we are going to be looking more closely, through the review of the Canada Transportation Act, at the importance of ensuring that the chain is robust, it can adapt to differences and that we attract investment into this chain over the long term. I am looking forward to that discussion and that review as well.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Chair, Bill C-30 is largely enabling legislation that would give the power to create regulations. Producers do not have a good idea about what the legislation would do until they actually see the regulations. The consultation has not yet started with respect to the regulations, and the weeks and months are ticking by.

I wonder if the minister can indicate when the consultation with stakeholders, even on an informal basis, will get under way so that they can know what is being contemplated under those regulations.

Will those regulations provide specific definitions of what constitutes level of service and how level of service will be measured in terms of performance? Will those regulations provide specifically for reciprocal penalties to be applied, which every single one of the witnesses before the parliamentary committee said was necessary?

● (2020)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, moving it to a regulatory power is very important because having a statutory obligation to come in to amend a statute is a much more blunt instrument than being able to move through regulatory reform.

As the hon. member knows as well, we will be striking a review panel for the CTA. It will be charged first and foremost with handling these matters that the hon. member just set out with respect to the movement of grain.

I cannot presuppose what the result of those consultations will be, nor what the advice of this panel would be. However, I can say that it will be charged with this at the outset as the most important thing for it to handle.

We look forward to being able to announce the launch of this panel in the coming weeks.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Chair, I assume that the regulations in all cases will be prepared well in advance of the beginning of the next crop year, on August 1, so farmers will be sure to know what they are.

Under Bill C-30, the section that empowers the Canadian Grain Commission to create regulations specifically contemplates penalties for performance failures, but the section in Bill C-30 that empowers the CTA to create regulations does not specifically refer to reciprocal penalties. Why is there a difference in the language? Does the government in fact plan that the regulations with respect to the railways not have that crucial power of reciprocal penalties? Will they be there or not?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, first of all, I want to clarify that once the bill is passed, of course, consultations on the regulations will commence.

When I was talking about the Canada Transportation Act review, I was talking about the bigger picture with respect to grain, and that too will happen as well.

With respect to the specific question regarding reciprocal penalties, it is an issue that has come up, which we have studied in the past. We came up with an act last year in order to deal that, the fair rail shippers act, which we passed.

In this case, we will be looking at the regulations and going to consultation on the same issues, and we will be prepared to give our feedback on that when those consultations are concluded.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Before we go to resuming debate, I would like to make a clarification. On the 15-minute time that is allocated to members, the maximum time in that 15 minutes for debate and/or a speech is 10 minutes. Normally in that 15-minute slot, one could take up to 10 minutes for remarks but the remaining 5 minutes would be left for questions from members of their particular caucus.

My apologies to the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. In the last iteration, we may have been off sync in terms of what we were doing.

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Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Chair, I apologize for my enthusiasm. I just could not wait to get started on this wonderful speech that I have for the House. It gives me a chance to offer congratulations on the minister's birthday a second time, so that is a good thing.

As I started out to say, I want to talk about Canada Post but I want to acknowledge at the outset that it is an arm's-length crown corporation.

First, let me deal with the financial situation at Canada Post. It is undeniable that the business of delivering mail has evolved at a remarkable rate, especially with the incredible popularity of electronic mail, but whether we talk about individuals, business, or governments, everybody has to live within their means. This is as true of me and my family as it is of the government or of Canada Post. Canadian families know they cannot continually spend more than they earn. Business and governments are no different. Canada Post will not receive government subsidies to operate in an unprofitable fashion. It must adapt, as we all have to.

That said, the throne speech highlighted our government's unwavering commitment to control spending while investing in Canadians' priorities to safeguard our economy. Year after year in budget after budget, we have put in place credible plans to achieve financial sustainability and set clear targets to bring our deficit down.

This was crucial as we dealt with the damaging effects of a worldwide recession, one of the worst in more than seven decades. We had to get our fiscal house in order to keep Canadians working and our economy growing. The proof of this commitment is in the results. I remind the House that one of minister Flaherty's greatest legacies will be a balanced budget in 2015.

More than just managing debt, our government is tackling spending. We are reducing the size and the cost of government to ensure taxpayers get good value for money. We are working hard to make government more efficient and responsive to the needs of Canadians. This is because of our overreaching goal to create the conditions for jobs, economic growth, and long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

We are the envy of the world. Three credit rating agencies, Moody's, Fitch, and Standard & Poor's, have reaffirmed their top ratings for Canada. Both the International Monetary Fund and the OECD expect Canada to be among the strongest growing economies in the G7 this year and next.

Reducing spending, lowering taxes, and paying down debt are enabling us to seize new economic opportunities as we promote free trade and innovation, the keys to job creation, economic growth, and prosperity. I lay out these facts to underline that these same truths apply just as much to Canada Post as it faces unprecedented challenges.

One need not be a learned scholar to judge the trends in the fiscal forecast of Canada Post to see where the trend leads. A 2013 report prepared by The Conference Board of Canada into the corporation's future projects that unless major changes are made, annual operating deficits will reach nearly \$1 billion by 2020, that is \$1 billion per year. That is certainly a deficit that requires significant and immediate attention.

While many Canadians will admit they use mail less and less, some are quick to point out the popularity of parcel delivery. Could this not be a promising area of business growth, they ask? Absolutely it can. The parcel market is increasing as more and more Canadians are making online purchases. E-commerce helped parcel volumes grow by about two million pieces in the first nine months of 2013 compared to the year earlier. Canada Post parcel revenue was up 11.2%, which amounts to \$32 million from the third quarter of 2012. However, I believe the minister could confirm that parcel revenues are simply not enough to compensate for mail volume declines.

Consider that in 2012, total transaction mail revenue amounted to \$3 billion or 51% of the corporation's operating revenues. Parcels on the other hand accounted for less than \$1.3 billion or 22% of operating revenues. Even though parcel volume is projected to increase by 26% by 2020, it will not be enough to get Canada Post out of the red.

● (2025)

Quite simply, the corporation's current business model no longer allows it to earn sufficient revenues to offset its cost. Without changes, the future viability of the postal service is in question.

As the minister has highlighted in this place many times before, the challenges of Canada Post have arisen in part because of the global recession. The pace of postal decline has been accelerating in Canada and other developed countries for a number of years. However, it has accelerated after the global recession began in 2008.

Companies cut their mailing costs as part of overall cost reductions. Many opted to ship more billing statements and marketing online. At the same time, individual consumers began moving en masse from traditional to digital communications. Canadians are now more likely to send a text message or an email than to take the time to write a letter, post it and wait several days to be delivered.

As the minister has noted many times, mail volumes per address have dropped by nearly 25% between 2008 and 2012. In fact, more than one billion fewer pieces of letter mail were sent last year than in 2006.

The U.S. Postal Service has reduced service hours and the number of employees to address financial pressures, for instance, while the U.K. has privatized and significantly increased stamp prices. Not to mention, neither of these countries presents the same unique challenges that our northern communities presents.

The digital economy is not going away. Canada Post has no option but to find new ways of doing business to keep its operation sustainable. Canada Post must manage its business prudently. It has no choice. It has a mandate to operate on a self-sustaining financial basis. Financial responsibility is a legislated obligation.

Business of Supply

The services currently provided by Canada Post are clearly no longer affordable. The corporation needs to spend within its means in the same way that individuals do as they manage their family budgets. More than that, change is essential if Canada Post is to keep pace with the choices Canadians are already making about the way they prefer to communicate.

Since delivery accounts for about 40% of Canada Post's operation costs, it is the most obvious place to start.

Door-to-door delivery is by far the most expensive mode of delivery. It costs between two and three times what it costs to deliver to a community mailbox. Compare \$283 annually for home delivery versus \$108 for community mailboxes. They are also cheaper than delivering to a rural mailbox, which rings in at \$179 per year.

To be clear, we are talking about changes affecting only home delivery. Businesses with large volumes of mail or located in business zones will generally retain their door-to-door delivery. However, the remaining one-third of Canadians still will have door-to-door service. The minority of people in our country, I would add and I am one of them, will gradually shift over the next five years to community mailboxes instead. Community mailboxes provide secure mail storage in a convenient place close to home to receive parcels and packages.

Remember that Canada Post introduced community mailboxes back in 1981, so it has been successfully delivering mail and packages this way for a very long time.

The corporation is expected to reduce its workforce by between 6,000 and 8,000 positions by 2019 and this will be achieved largely through attrition, which will help reduce its overhead dramatically. Like most workplaces populated by baby boomers, many will leave the workforce in a few years' time.

In closing, I have a question that I would like to pose for the minister. I hate to present her with such a tough question, but although it is tough, it is fair. I was hoping that the minister would inform the House on the current crisis facing Canada Post and the government's commitment to ensuring that it does not become a burden on taxpayers, because the taxpayers are up to here with unnecessary costs. Please explain what we can expect the post office to do to rein in these costs?

• (2030)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his insight into a topic that we certainly must understand better.

In 1981, Canada Post was set up as a crown corporation. In its documents, it was done so to ensure that postal services, financial security and independence continued. That is exactly what we are trying to do today by accepting Canada Post's five-point plan for moving into the future.

The reality is twofold. First, Canada Post has to actually deliver to more mailboxes or to more addresses than before. It is increased by 1.2 million. Second, Canada Post, as well, is delivering fewer letters. In fact, most Canadian families only buy two stamps a month. That is significant.

It is clear that the five-point plan is something Canada Post has researched, has consulted on, has studied and has indicated is its best path forward for achieving financial self-sustainability along with the continued service provision that it needs to do.

I appreciated the words of my hon. friend when he talked about the costs associated with community mailboxes. In terms of trying to ensure that we have a delivery system that is efficient and cost-effective, it is important to note that the door-to-door service to one-third of Canadian households is \$298 on an average annual cost per address. However, delivering to a community mailbox is \$113 on an annual cost per address basis.

That is a significant savings. It is one of those kinds of savings that Canada Post has looked at to ensure Canadians will continue to receive mail on a daily basis, which is what it said it wanted to do. At the same time, what it also said was it wanted to ensure it was not relying upon taxpayer dollars. That is what Canada Post is attempting to achieve.

• (2035)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Chair, the minister mentioned a five-point plan. Could she elaborate a little on that five-point plan? Is it a tenable proposal to return Canada Post to fiscal responsibility?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I can only refer to the news release that Canada Post has put out, because it is its five-point plan. What it says in the title is that the plan will return system to financial sustainability by 2019 and ensure continued role of enabling trade and commerce.

It is looking at areas of growth. The hon. member mentioned those, and one of them, of course, was parcel delivery. As indicated, with the increase in the amount of addresses Canada Post has to deliver to and the lack of letter mail that is delivered, it does have to do other things.

In its five-point plan, it lays out certain things it would like to do. The main initiatives are these: over the next five years, convert the remaining one-third of Canadian households that receive their mail at the door to community mailbox delivery; that it has a new approach to pricing letter mail to take effect, which has happened; that it expands convenience through postal franchisees; that it streamlines its operations; and that it does address the cost of labour.

As was pointed out by the hon. member, it is worthy to note that the average age of a current employee of Canada Post is 48 years old, almost my age today. Canada Post expects that nearly 15,000 employees will retire or leave the company over the next 5 years. That is more enough, in its view, to allow for the reduction of between 6,000 and 8,000 positions, mainly through attrition.

It is taking a legacy company and turning it around for the future, meeting the needs of Canadians and doing so in a financially self-sustaining manner.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Chair, on the particular topic of Canada Post, speakers have noted that Canada Post has put forward a five-point plan. In that there are a mixture of measures both to increase revenues for the company, as well as cutting costs.

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One of the items not talked about, but is a looming issue with respect to all postal operations around the world, or at least in advanced economies, is some of the difficulties funding pensions. I know that was an additional measure that had to be undertaken.

Could the minister talk about how the government had to assist Canada Post with respect to its obligations in order to manage its cash flow situation?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, what we have seen is that those companies in the Canadian federal jurisdiction that had fund benefit plans in the past number of years have experienced difficulties with respect to their pension not being sufficient to pay the obligations they have amassed.

The minister of finance has dealt with that matter with respect to Canada Post. There have been some various abilities given to Canada Post with respect to that.

That aside, what is important is that it has a plan operationally to ensure there will be a continuous self-sustaining basis going into the future, taking into consideration all of its obligations, including pension obligations.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Chair, let me join with others in wishing the minister a happy birthday. Good for her to be with us on such an auspicious occasion, or perhaps she, like I, would rather forgo recognition of these dates at this point in time.

In any case, I appreciate the minister being here to answer some important questions to which Canadians want answers. The questions first and foremost among them have to do with the safety of our transportation system.

The Transportation Safety Board has issued its 2013 statistics for Canadian marine, pipeline, railway and aviation accidents. Could the minister tell us what the increase in accidents was over the previous year?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I will take the information from my parliamentary secretary. Overall, the number of accidents increased by 3% from 2012, with respect to marine, pipeline, railway and aviation occurrences. That is a significant number of transportation occurrences that are reported, 3,395. Compared to the five-year average, the number of incidents increased, yet the number of accidents actually decreased by 4%.

• (2040)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the intervention from the parliamentary secretary, although I had the answer: the 3% increase, to almost 3,400 accidents across Canada.

Could the minister tell us by what percentage she cut Transport Canada's spending on transportation safety?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I can appreciate what the hon. member is trying to drive at. I can tell him this. In rail safety, no government has contributed more in financing this area than this government. We have demonstrated that from 2009 until currently, putting over \$100 million in rail safety areas.

In the marine safety area, the kinds of work that our inspectors do and as well the kinds of work people do with respect to safety and security is extremely important, and we have to ensure that we

continue to do the right things. In fact, as I mentioned in my speaking notes, we increased marine security and marine safety through world-class tanker funding by 686%. That is going to be significant and will have significant—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order, please. The hon. member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, the minister appreciated what I was driving at, but did not answer the question that I was driving at, which is this. What were the cuts in safety that led to the 3% increase and almost 3,400 accidents across Canada?

However, in any case, does the minister agree with the Transportation Safety Board that all commercial marine vessels should have safety management systems, and that those systems should be certified and audited?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to aviation safety, going back to the hon. member's previous question, it is important to note that any decrease that he may see in the main estimates with respect to aviation safety is predominantly attributed to the movement of an air capital assistance sub-program to reflect a new administrative structure. It is not a decrease in safety.

He cannot stand in the House and say that cuts in safety that are not happening are causing more accidents. That is completely irresponsible for the member to say such a thing as that. He should know better.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, I am just here to ask the questions, and the minister seems to be avoiding the questions but telling me what I cannot say. She not only avoided the very important question about cuts to transportation and safety spending under that regime, but also avoided answering the last question about whether the government supported safety management systems on marine vessels.

Let me continue to the next one. Does the minister believe that port authorities should engage in deep and meaningful consultation with their host municipalities before they implement new development projects?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, under the Canada Marine Act, it is noted that the port authorities should have consultation and they should actually be there to ensure they are furthering local needs, taking into consideration marine users as well. Their obligations are to ensure that the port services are there to support the port, but as well they do it in consultation. That is the reason we have port authorities set up, so they can have that direct co-operation with their local communities in consultation.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, let me ask the minister why the Toronto Port Authority is beginning work on runway design and environmental assessment to accommodate jets at the Billy Bishop island airport? Does the minister believe that this is in contravention of the tripartite agreement with the City of Toronto and the federal government?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as the hon. member knows, I have experience with the tripartite agreement in Toronto. What I know from that information is that the Toronto Port Authority is responsible for the operation of that facility. It is allowed to undertake the actions for the operation of that facility, as has been recognized in the past.

Business of Supply

I will point out to the hon. member that going for a tender in order to perform an environmental assessment is one thing, but the environmental assessment is the basis of consultation with the surrounding community. The consultation has to happen through that process, and frankly, it should happen in that process.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, those responses to the last two questions seem contradictory.

In the first one, the minister said that there should be meaningful consultation. The second one was a reversion to the rights of the port authority to do what it wants. I am not sure how she reconciles those or what exactly the answer is as to why the Toronto Port Authority is proceeding the way it is in Toronto.

Let me ask this. Does the minister believe that the federal government should respect the City of Toronto's right to implement its vision for its waterfront to allow Waterfront Toronto to get under its mandate and get on with its good work, including ways to manage effects such as noise, traffic, and land use impacts?

● (2045)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to the tripartite agreement, one fundamental part of the tripartite agreement is that there will not be an extension of the runway. The Toronto Port Authority knows that. It does not have the ability to build that. It does not have the agreement of the other parties, the federal government and the City of Toronto, on that matter. For it to do an environmental assessment is one thing; the ability to build that extension is quite a different one, and that issue has not been decided.

With respect to the Toronto Port Authority and Waterfront Toronto, my former colleague, the former Minister of Finance, was a great champion of Waterfront Toronto. He left a great legacy on our waterfront with respect to ensuring that there were funds available to do the revitalization of that part of the world. I am very proud of the work that Jim Flaherty did down there. I am proud of Sugar Beach. I am very proud of everything that Waterfront Toronto has done, including all of the changes with respect to transportation. He was a driving force in this matter, and no matter what the hon. member says, no one can take that away from him.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, I could not hear the minister's response over the cheering behind her.

The question remains why the federal government would let the Toronto Port Authority run roughshod over the work of Waterfront Toronto that the minister seems to be applauding.

On the issue of port authorities, is the minister aware how many Conservative donors have been given lucrative appointments on the boards of directors of port authorities across this country?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, having served as corporate secretary for various boards, one in particular being the Toronto Port Authority, what I can tell the House is that the appointments to the port authorities are taken seriously. They are vetted through a process. Indeed, highly qualified people sit on these local port authorities for very little compensation to ensure that the right things are happening in their local communities. We thank them for their service. They do good work.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, I wonder what that vetting process is and how serious it is, because the number of Conservative Party donors sitting on these boards is perhaps too high for the minister to count.

Has the minister herself ever recommended Conservative donors for appointments to Canadian port authorities in her tenure as the transport minister?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I can tell the House that the way the appointments work with respect to port authorities is very specific. It is laid out in their letters patent.

They divide themselves into user groups. The user groups then vet the candidates and then present the information to the minister in order to make the recommendation to the Governor in Council for the appointment. There is quite a robust structure to the nominating procedure to ensure that it is advertised in the community. It has to be advertised in the community. That is where the pool of candidates comes from.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, I do not think that was an answer to the question about whether the minister herself has ever appointed a Conservative donor to a Canadian port authority in her tenure.

Let me ask this. How many of the directors on the board of the Toronto Port Authority are Conservative donors? I think the answer is at least three.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as the hon. member probably knows, there are rules with respect to directors on port authorities, and they are not allowed to make political donations, even to his party, if they want to.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Or Québec solidaire, Mr. Chair.

● (2050)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, they are not allowed to make donations to political parties, being federal appointments. On that basis, I have no knowledge of what he is speaking about.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Let me clarify, Mr. Chair. We are asking how many donated before the appointment, not while they were appointed. We know that there are at least three members of the board of directors of the Toronto Port Authority who had donated to the Conservative Party in advance of their appointments.

How many accidents involving passenger trains colliding with vehicles at level crossings have occurred over the past 10 years, as documented by the Transportation Safety Board?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, we will get that number and information for the member. Obviously, there is a lot of information here at the table before me. We will find that and provide it for him. I do not have it at my fingertips right now.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, there have been 257 of these accidents in Canada over the last 10 years.

Can the minister explain to us why the accident rate between passenger trains and vehicles has not been reduced under her government?

Business of Supply

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as the hon. member knows, there are a number of reasons accidents happen. It is part of the work of the Transportation Safety Board to determine the factors that are contributing in each particular accident, and we learn from those recommendations, obviously, going forward.

With respect to the number of accidents in 10 years, quite frankly, one is too many, and we all agree with that. That is why we have things like Operation Lifesaver. That is why we do work on grade separation. That is why I have round tables with local communities to talk about the importance of it. That is why we talk to school kids, and that is why we have Rail Safety Week. In everything we do, we are trying to ensure that we have safer railways. We continuously work on it, and the people who work at Transport Canada in that sector do an excellent job.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, if she cannot explain the accident rates, that is cold comfort to Canadians who are worried about rail safety in this country. The minister's response, if I can paraphrase, which is that it is for a whole bunch of reasons, is hardly satisfactory for a minister who places safety, purportedly, as her top priority.

Back to the port authorities. Is it the opinion of the minister that port authorities should follow provincial environmental laws and respect municipal visions and the right to be adequately consulted?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as the hon. member knows, this is a federal jurisdiction. These are federal lands, and therefore they have a whole regime that applies to them under the operating regulations and the Canadian environmental regulations that are specific to port authorities in Canada.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, does the minister believe that she has the responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Canada's transportation sector? What is her responsibility to encourage public transit to that end?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, in fact, we can see from the main estimates, which I thought we were actually going to be talking about tonight and was prepared for, but nonetheless, one thing we have a fund for is clean air from transportation. There are a number of projects in there that are extremely important to ensure that we do what we can to make sure we have clean air. We have invested significantly in that, and we will continue to do so to make sure that the folks who are doing work in the area will continue to do that work.

Specifically, we are proposing in the main estimates this year that we have access to \$38,992,028 in spending authorities for the specific program activity to ensure that the good work these people do continues with respect to ensuring clean air from emissions and shore power technology.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Chair, does the minister agree that Canada needs a national public transit strategy?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: I wish I had more time to talk about that, Mr. Chair. I will say one thing. I have a long history in transportation, and I can say that what I have learned is that transportation needs in Sydney, Nova Scotia, versus what is needed in Milton, Ontario, versus what is needed in Wascana, Saskatchewan, are very different from one another. Having a single strategy of one-size-fits-all does not necessarily work and is not the best use of taxpayer dollars.

I prefer our economic action plan and our Building Canada fund. Those things are targeted and are there to ensure that when a community says it wants a project, this is the project we do. It is not one-size-fits-all.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would certainly like to wish the minister the best of greetings on a special day and thank her for being here tonight.

In December last year, Canada Post Corporation released a comprehensive five-point action plan entitled "Ready for the Future". It was designed to realign how it delivers and prices postal services to meet Canadians' emerging and future needs while substantially reducing costs to the taxpayer.

This is a watershed moment for Canada's national postal service. Letter mail volumes have been declining since 2006, when Canada Post delivered 1.2 billion more letters than it did in 2013. That is a big number. The corporation estimates that for every 1% drop in mail volume, it loses \$30 million in revenue. This is placing a huge strain on Canada Post's finances, as witnessed by losses of \$129 million, before tax, in the postal segment alone in the third quarter of fiscal year 2013. It is quite clear that the services, as currently provided by Canada Post, are no longer sustainable.

Canada Post must now manage its business as a viable commercial enterprise that competes effectively in every product line. Even its traditional direct marketing business is facing digital rivals that use mobile and smart technologies, and the parcel business operates in a highly competitive environment.

The corporation is well aware that to build on recent successes, it must attract customers in an increasingly complex economic environment. The parcel business, unlike letter mail, is highly competitive, and parcel volumes have been rising worldwide. Postal services in many countries have been aggressively using their extensive sorting and delivery infrastructure to expand in this sector. Globalization has more parcels coming into Canada to be processed to the same high standards, and the highly competitive parcel delivery market means that service providers must modify operations in order to win and retain customers with the quality and reliability of their service. In the business of the customer parcel delivery market, that means providing fast, reliable, and convenient delivery, excellent tracking options, and reasonable prices.

The growth in the parcel industry has also intensified local and global competition. FedEx and UPS, for example, have increased their competitive positions in Canada. Customer patterns have also shifted from premium to less urgent products that cost less. The increased competitive landscape has put increased pressure on Canada Post to manage costs, improve product offerings, and provide a superior customer experience.

Business of Supply

With approximately 40% of parcel deliveries to Canada originating internationally, Canada Post has negotiated bilateral agreements, notably with the United States and China, to increase its share of this inbound traffic. The corporation has also made extensive investments in new facilities, including a 700,000 square foot plant at Vancouver International Airport. It has increased real-time tracking through portable scanners for employees and has added to its capacity for motorized delivery to handle growing package volumes.

Canada Post also offered on-demand parcel pickup for small businesses in 2011 and 2012. It provided enhanced web services for online retailers, including seamless management of returns.

I wish to emphasize that the government is committed to ensuring transparency in how Canada Post provides quality postal service to all Canadians, rural and urban, individuals and businesses, in a secure and financially self-sustaining manner. That is why the government established the Canadian postal service charter in 2009, which set out its expectations regarding Canada Post service standards and related activities in providing postal services that meet the needs of Canadians.

An important aspect of the postal service charter is its commitment to universal service that ensures that Canadians in both urban and rural areas can send and receive letter mail and parcels within Canada and between Canada and elsewhere. As part of Canada Post's continued commitment to parcel delivery, parcel services to Canadians living in rural and northern communities not currently serviced by competing parcel delivery companies will have significantly wider access to, and the ability to return products from, Canada and around the world. This is crucial for the many rural and northern communities not currently served by private sector courier companies.

● (2055)

Canada Post's five-point action plan embraces the principle of reform without seeking any change to the Canadian Postal Service Charter. This plan is about giving Canadians the postal service they need in the emerging digital economy. Canada Post is quite aware of the changing face of the postal industry and has been preparing for a future with less mail and more parcels for a number of years.

The corporation has implemented measures to expand its parcel volume both through its postal operations and through its Purolator courier service. For example, changes to internal operations first begun in 2010 have made for a more efficient flow of parcels through the network to the customer. Canada Post has launched an aggressive plan to invest in replacing its aging processing infrastructure and delivery processes with more modern and cost-effective approaches driven by technology. The sorting equipment in place today is much faster and more accurate. From a delivery perspective, it has meant a massive shift toward motorization.

Canada Post will continue to leverage these investments. Doing so will further reduce the cost of processing the mail and will allow the company to better serve the growing parcel market and provide the services Canadians will need in the future.

In many urban areas, Canada Post has moved away from letter carriers delivering mail by foot to carriers who leave their depot every morning with a fuel-efficient van containing the mail and

parcels for delivery on their route. Putting mail and parcels in one truck for delivery provides a better end-customer experience, especially in the parcel business, at a much lower cost to the corporation. These improvements will allow Canada Post to compete more effectively in the fast-paced and technology-driven global parcel market. All kinds of parcels are now flowing through Canada Post sorting plants, including items that depend on fast and accurate delivery, from health care products and gourmet food to live bees and baby chicks.

Canada Post realizes that the parcel business is highly competitive and it does not have the exclusive privilege to deliver parcels, as it does for letters. Therefore, the corporation has focused on providing a superior customer experience, recognizing the attachment Canadians have to their parcels. Canada Post has indicated a desire to expand en-route pickups and launch a comprehensive returns solution that will benefit e-commerce merchants and shoppers by improving inventory management, returns processes, and automatic billing.

An important component of Canada Post's proposed strategy is its intention to build upon its current strength in parcel delivery, which has demonstrated growth over the past few years thanks in large measure to the fast-growing market of online shoppers.

It is clear that Canadians have become enthusiastic online consumers. Statistics Canada reported in October 2012 that the value of orders placed online by Canadians reached \$18.9 billion in 2012, up 24% from 2010 when the survey was last conducted. That is 24% in two years. More than half of Internet users, 56%, ordered goods or services online in 2012. Perhaps even more encouraging, most Internet shoppers, 82%, had placed an order from a company in Canada.

Canada Post's parcels line of business currently offers a range of domestic and international delivery services and is the largest player in the Canadian parcel market, with more than 50% market share. The corporation sees an unprecedented opportunity for additional growth linked to e-commerce as online business activity increases. Customers for parcel services include businesses, consumers of all sizes, governments, international postal administrations, and other delivery companies.

According to a recent report by the Conference Board of Canada, residential and small business customers indicated that their demand for parcel service will continue to rise with the spread of e-commerce.

Business of Supply

• (2100)

Parcels are the fastest-growing line of service in the core Canada Post business. The corporation reports that overall growth in parcel volumes experienced a record-breaking holiday season, which runs between November 11 and January 4. Canada Post delivered 30 million parcels during this period, which was five million more than the holiday season last year. The corporation delivered more than one million parcels in a day, on 10 different days. Weekend delivery was also very successful. Canada Post employees delivered a total of 1.1 million parcels over the six weekends of the holiday season, with the highest number of deliveries occurring on the December 21–22 weekend. That is 317,000 deliveries.

The main reason behind this growth is that parcels are the one postal product that has seen growth driven by the digital revolution. Canada Post advises that its top-25 retail customers are making major e-commerce gains. January parcel volumes from these retailers shot up 35% compared to January of last year. This dramatic increase follows a highly successful holiday season in which year-over-year parcel volumes from this top-performing group grew by 50%.

It is very obvious that things and times change. They have certainly changed at Canada Post, and it has tried to adapt.

I have a question for the minister. The opposition is refusing to see that Canada Post is facing a new digital reality. Can the minister please explain why the status quo was not a possible solution to Canada Post's financial situation?

• (2105)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his insightful remarks, once again, on Canada Post.

I would invite those who have not taken a look at it, incontrovertible facts that are located within the Canada Post Corporation's 2013 annual report about the status-quo approach. Its plan includes how they plan on dealing with some realities. I thought I would quote from Canada Post, since it is an arm's-length crown corporation that is responsible for its own operations, to give its perspective on why it came up with the five-point plan that we have accepted.

This is what it said:

...households and businesses have moved away from mail as a primary source of communication. They freely use electronic means to send and receive their mail. As a result, in the digital economy, Canada Post's exclusive privilege to deliver letters no longer adequately funds what's called the universal service obligation.
...

Transaction Mail volumes per address have dropped 30 per cent since 2007. Less mail equals less revenue, while the costs of providing postal service are largely fixed.

In 2013, we delivered 1.2 billion fewer pieces of Domestic Lettermail™ than we did in 2006, putting at risk a service to Canadians that has existed for longer than Canada has been independent.

Our challenge was to put forward a plan that balances the needs of all Canadians, while addressing the legacy costs of a system built mainly to process and deliver a large volume of mail. Reducing our cost of operations in many ways has helped, but we had to do much more to reshape the postal system and avoid chronic financial losses.

With that certainty, we announced our Five-Point Action Plan in late 2013 to build the foundation of a new postal system for Canadians. It reflects what we heard from people across the country as we talked about the future of the postal service in towns,

cities and online. Canadians want a postal system they can count on to meet their changing needs, but they also expect it to avoid becoming a drain on their tax dollars.

It's the result of two years of analyzing all options, including those at post offices around the world, to determine what would work best for Canadians. We're streamlining our operations, addressing the cost of labour, adjusting our pricing to better reflect today's environment, expanding convenience through franchise post offices and moving the remaining five million door-to-door customers to community mail box delivery. This comprehensive five-year plan will return Canada Post to solid financial footing and provide a platform for growth fuelled by the changing needs of the people and businesses we serve.

Clearly, Canada Post has put a lot of thought, effort, study, and insight into what its five-point plan will be as we are dealing with the realities of the digital economy. I appreciate, as I said before, the hon. member bringing this issue to light.

The Chair: That concludes this segment. Resuming debate, the hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Chair, I wish the minister a happy birthday. I did not want to be left out.

Would the minister agree that her primary responsibility is to ensure that Canadians using or affected by the transportation system are kept as safe as possible?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, Transport Canada absolutely believes that the safety and security of Canadians in the transportation infrastructure and in the systems is of utmost importance. I always say that it is my top priority.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, the minister would then agree that it is not to protect the profitability of certain companies, not to work with lobbyists or issue press releases to protect the government, but to protect Canadians?

Can the minister tell us how many unsafe DOT-111 rail cars are used in Canada for transporting dangerous goods?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I can tell the hon. member that the universe of DOT-111s for flammable service in North America is 67,000.

• (2110)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, can the member tell us how many of those rail cars are carrying explosive crude oil, like the type contributing to the tragedy at Lac-Mégantic?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I do not have the specific numbers other than to indicate what the volumes have been. We know that they have been increasing in terms of the volumes of crude oil being shipped through these means.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, how is the government ensuring that the most volatile cargo is being transported in the safest cars? Can the minister confirm that the most unsafe cars will be phased out in less than or within the planned three years?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, in our response to the TSB recommendations, we indicated that the most unsafe cars, 5,000 of them specifically, will be phased out shorter than that, within 30 days. With respect to the balance of the DOT-111 cars for use in crude oil or ethanol, that they would be retrofitted or phased out in the next three years.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, how fast can the manufacturers in all of North America make new replacements for the DOT-111s?

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Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, my officials have consulted with industry on the matter and they have brought back information. We considered these factors when we set out three years as the appropriate plan. We thought it was a good balance between what industry will be pushed to do and what we needed to do for the safety of Canadians.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, we were told in the committee that it was 14,000 per year, and so to replace 67,000 rail cars, it will take four and a half years.

Has the minister explored ways to speed up the manufacturing of new rail cars?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, absolutely. I think it is important to note that under current market conditions, of course without the regulatory piece that we put in place most recently in our announcement of three years, it probably was the amount that they could do.

I have great confidence that the market will respond to this issue, that they will find capacity, and that they will continue to want to do this work. As the parliamentary secretary mentioned, this is an opportunity for construction and jobs as well.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, actually we were told that if all of the capacity in North America was converted to building only DOT-111 replacements, it would be 14,000 per year.

The Transportation Safety Board has said that the DOT-111s can break and explode at speeds as low as 20 miles per hour.

What speed does the minister now allow DOT-111s to travel at in cities?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, in a Transportation Safety Board response, we indicated that we would order immediately that key trains carrying crude oil would be reduced to 50 miles per hour. However, risk analysis and assessments would have to be carried out in certain areas, taking into consideration certain factors to see whether that speed would be lowered to 40 miles per hour.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Then, Mr. Chair, the minister allows them to travel at 40 miles per hour in cities, which is still a speed at which the rail cars can break and explode.

How will the minister be able to enforce this, or any other speed, with continued cuts to inspections at Transport Canada?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I completely reject the premise of that assertion at the tail end of the question. There is no evidence that we have cut safety inspectors in this country with respect to rail. In fact, we are the ones who increased the amount of funding in it.

With respect to the specific question, let me just say that there is a myriad of issues that come into play. We expect that railway companies will adhere and abide by regulations we put in place; otherwise, they would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, we understand that the minister is committing now to implementing the Transportation Safety Board's recommendations that key routes be inspected twice a year and sidelines once a year. Is that correct?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I was very specific in the Transportation Safety Board response we gave on April 23, and I did not refer to any of those matters.

I did indicate that we were making some changes in the protective direction. We would make sure, going forward, in terms of the emergency directive, that we require railway companies to immediately implement key operating practices responding to the recommendation, including reducing the speed of trains transporting dangerous goods.

That is taking place with respect to elements that are already in place in the United States, in a circular regarding operating practices specifically, because they have signed a memorandum of co-operation between the U.S. DOT and the Association of American Railroads as well.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, she did not answer that question.

How frequently are Transport Canada officials currently inspecting key routes and side lines?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I can say that there are approximately 30,000 inspections done per year. This year we are looking at 33,000 inspections, which is the highest number we have ever contemplated and produced.

● (2115)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, she still did not answer my question.

Will the minister ensure that the new emergency response assistance plans are made public so that local officials and first responders can plan accordingly?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, one of the recommendations from the Transportation Safety Board was to require emergency response assistance plans. We are doing so for even a single tank car carrying crude oil, gasoline, diesel, aviation fuel, or ethanol.

In developing those, industry will be working together with first responders on these plans. They have 150 days to submit them to Transport Canada, but as well, there will be a key committee that will be working together on this specific matter. This information is for the purposes associated with first responders so that they can have the ability to get the information they need in a timely fashion. How it will be disseminated will be something that the committee will discuss.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: So we still do not know, Mr. Chair.

One of the issues that has been raised is the number of DOT-111s carrying crude oil travelling through dense metropolitan areas. The CP main line goes through the city of Toronto. It would be possible for CP to avoid running DOT-111s through Toronto by buying space on CN's lines north of Toronto. Why is this not being forced upon CP?

Business of Supply

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, the way in which we are dealing with the recommendations from the Transportation Safety Board includes strong action regarding the means of containment of crude oil, protective directions under the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, making sure that we have ERAPS in place, and ensuring that they are taking a look at some of the key operations.

Let us be very clear: in general, the system is safe. A terrible derailment happened in Lac-Mégantic, a terrible incident, but in general the system is safe, and 99.997% of the time dangerous goods make it to their destination. We want to strengthen railway safety and ensure that it continues in a positive way, and we want to make the system safer because we can always do better.

We should not be starting from the premise that the opposition is indicating, which is that this is unsafe, because it is not unsafe. I will come back and quote what his own members have said about the safety of this railway system, and it is completely irresponsible to say it is unsafe.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: In fact, Mr. Chair, we have already established that accidents are increasing, so whether it is safe or not is moot, because 99.997% of 100,000 rail cars is still three rail cars exploding in somebody's backyard, and it is not something we wish to have happen.

The government has not ordered railways to actually reroute trains with dangerous goods outside of urban areas, and members of the public believe that should be done.

The railroads are also being asked by the government to conduct their own risk analysis of whether or not it is safe to transport such tremendous volumes of dangerous goods, particularly crude oil, through dense urban areas. Those volumes have increased by 400% in just three years.

In conducting the risk analysis for the regulatory changes, how much is a human life worth?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to the metrics the hon. member is attempting to lead me down, I can say that all of our efforts at Transport Canada with respect to the safety file are about ensuring that Canadians and communities are protected. In doing so, we are making sure that on the one hand we are not moving forward so quickly so that it cannot catch up, but on the other hand we are moving forward quickly enough so that we are protecting citizens.

A great example of that is taking the very principled and strong position that DOT-111 cars for ethanol and crude oil will be phased out over the next three years, something that is not happening in the United States.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, in fact there have been more derailments of DOT-111s than just the one in Lac-Mégantic, and people in Canada are considerably worried about the volume of this stuff going through their communities.

Regarding fatigue management for railways, when will the process begin to work with companies and workers to create new safety management systems?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to safety management systems, they are already currently in place in four railways. These things are taken into consideration. That is something that the

Teamsters or Unifor would be working on with their individual companies, depending upon which company it is.

The safety management system is not just one system. It is about taking a corporate culture and ensuring that we incorporate safety into every aspect of it. That is the route we have taken in Canada in safety management systems, because simply put, we have 46,000 kilometres of track in the country and we simply cannot have individual inspectors for every piece of track. That is why safety management systems are important, and they are clearly the more professional and the correct way to go.

• (2120)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, how many rail safety incidents and accidents in Canada were found to be linked to fatigue? My question was about fatigue.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: I understand your question was about fatigue and its role in safety management systems. I also indicated that it is a role that is taken very seriously by the Teamsters. I have met with the Teamsters on this issue of fatigue. I know they work with their companies on the matter as well.

With respect to the specific numbers of the Transportation Safety Board and how many are associated with fatigue, I would have to take a look at the full listing of them in order to give that specific information, but I am pretty sure you have an idea of what the number is and I am sure you will tell me it now.

The Chair: I would ask the minister to direct her comments toward the Chair, not toward the member asking the question.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, is the minister concerned that workers with constantly changing schedules who work morning, afternoon, and night shifts on a five-day cycle may not have an opportunity for proper rest?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as the former minister of labour and current Minister of Transport, I have had this discussion with the Teamsters.

I think it is a valid concern in fatigue management to ensure that science is utilized to make sure that we have appropriate systems in place and, as always, I encourage the Teamsters to work with their management to ensure that they are doing all that they can.

For our part, in terms of Transport Canada, we already have regulations in place for hours of duty.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, why did the minister use the budget implementation act to reduce requirements for Transport Canada to notify the public about changes to rail regulations?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, it was not specifically to do with rail regulations. That portion of the act is there predominantly to deal with motor vehicle regulation changes.

Business of Supply

The reality is that in terms of the United States and harmonization, sometimes the U.S. can move forward quickly in regulations while we cannot move forward as quickly.

This is one of the acts in which it is mandatory to go to *Canada Gazette* part I. All we are saying in this case is that instead of mandatorily going to the *Gazette* part I, we would seek permission from the Treasury Board, after giving analysis and reasoning, not to go through that process and to proceed directly to the *Gazette* part II. There would still be oversight on that decision.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Through you, Mr. Chair, what was the cause of the derailment of the Burlington VIA Rail train?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, we thank the Transportation Safety Board for its report on the tragedy that happened in the riding that is actually adjacent to mine.

Excessive speed was the cause of the accident.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, does the minister agree that a form of automatic braking or positive train control would improve safety for passenger rail lines?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, this is an issue that has come up in both the United States and in Canada. Indeed, it is an issue in the U. K. as well.

It is an expensive process to implement that across 46,000 kilometres of track. It is something that Transport Canada is considering, and we continue to work on the matter. We are aware of what the Transportation Safety Board has indicated, and we are still analyzing all the issues around this.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Chair, that comes back to the price of a life. It is an expensive process, but lives are lost.

How many missed signals are there each year? How many would be avoided by a positive train control?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the question. I do not have that information.

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Chair, let me begin by saying how much I appreciate the opportunity not only to participate in this debate this evening, but how much we all appreciate the opportunity to celebrate the minister's birthday with her this evening.

This evening I would like to speak about Canadian ports, specifically the Port Metro Vancouver, and the benefits the port brings to the Canadian economy.

The 18 port authorities that comprise Canada's port system are central to Canada's economic activity. These port authorities handle a significant amount of Canadian trade, approximately 310 million tons of cargo valued at more than \$162 billion annually. On the whole, Canadian port authorities contribute about \$24.5 billion to the Canadian gross domestic product and provide almost 269,000 jobs for Canadians.

Port Metro Vancouver is the largest and most diversified port in Canada. It is also the fourth-largest tonnage port in North America. In short, the port is a major economic force that facilitates trade between Canada and more than 160 world economies, and handles 19% of Canada's total trade. The operation of Port Metro Vancouver

is complex, and it is key to Canada's overall supply chain. The port's operations involve many different enterprises, including cargo terminals, cruise terminals, shipyards, railways, trucks, and shipping agents. In addition to facilitating trade, one of the most significant economic benefits the port provides is direct and indirect employment, not just for British Columbia but for other provinces as far away as our own home province of Ontario.

A recent study of the economic impact of Port Metro Vancouver showed that its ongoing operations support 38,200 direct jobs in British Columbia. The direct impact of this employment on British Columbia's economy is estimated at \$3.5 billion in gross domestic product, \$8.5 billion in economic output, and \$2.3 billion in wages. The indirect impacts of the port's operations on businesses in British Columbia are even more impressive: 76,800 jobs; \$6.7 billion in gross domestic product; \$14.5 billion in economic output; and \$4.6 billion in wages. These indirect impacts include tourism revenues related to cruise-ship passengers.

The majority of direct employment generated by the operations of Port Metro Vancouver is located within the Lower Mainland area. However, there are also close to 10,100 off-site jobs supported by the economic activity of Port Metro Vancouver. This off-site employment represents about 22% of total direct Port Metro Vancouver businesses' employment and reaches through western Canada and beyond. Outside of British Columbia, the largest direct employment impact is in Alberta, followed by Ontario. This includes supporting 2,700 direct jobs in Alberta and 1,600 direct jobs in Ontario. Members can see the vital role that Port Metro Vancouver plays in securing our country's long-term prosperity.

For those who do not know, Port Metro Vancouver operates across five business sectors: automobiles, breakbulk, bulk, containers, and cruise. Based on data from 2013, Port Metro Vancouver handled 135 million tons of cargo, a record for the port, with an overall increase of 9% over 2012. Import and export tonnage maintained balanced growth, each showing a 9% increase.

● (2125)

The port is leveraging the strong performance with significant capital investment intended to further increase its competitiveness. This investment will further contribute to the port's economic impact on the regional and national economies.

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By 2022, Port Metro Vancouver has identified \$1.4 billion in capital investment to further increase its performance. This additional economic activity is generated by expenditures associated with Port Metro Vancouver's current capital program and by the capital investments of Port Metro Vancouver's tenants. Together, in pursuing this capital investment plan, Port Metro Vancouver and Port Metro Vancouver tenants will create an estimated total of 2,800 direct person-years annually, with a potential total impact of 6,100 person-years of employment.

As others have noted in this place before, our government has worked to improve supply chain efficiency, reliability, and security so that Canada stays competitive in the continuously evolving world of global commerce. For example, we launched the Asia-Pacific gateway and corridor initiative and, to date, we have invested \$1.4 billion in Asia-Pacific gateway projects in partnership with all four western provinces, municipalities, and the private sector. Many of these projects form a critical portion of a supply chain that also includes Port Metro Vancouver.

Furthermore, under the Prime Minister's leadership, our government is making unprecedented investments in infrastructure, solidifying a pivotal base in much of our transportation network through, of course, our new Building Canada plan. Key transportation assets, including port infrastructure, will be eligible for funding under the \$4-billion national infrastructure component of the plan, which is earmarked for projects of national significance.

Given that efficient and reliable operations at Port Metro Vancouver are critical to Canada's Asia-Pacific gateway and the national economy, the Government of Canada recently took action to support the resumption of trucking operations at Port Metro Vancouver. The estimated economic losses to Canada during the recent work stoppage were estimated at \$126,000 per day. We found this unacceptable and acted quickly to develop a joint action plan in conjunction with the Province of British Columbia and Port Metro Vancouver to bring stability to the container trucking industry. The plan contains 15 points for implementation and provides a framework for long-term stability in the container trucking industry. All parties are working together to implement the plan with input from key stakeholders.

Our government is committing to removing roadblocks to prosperity, which is why we acted quickly to bring stability to the industry, diminish wait times, and prevent disruptions in the future. For example, the Government of Canada brought in new regulations to increase the rates paid to truckers at Port Metro Vancouver.

As you know, Mr. Chair, our government's focus is to create jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity for all Canadians, but we cannot achieve these goals on our own. Port Metro Vancouver is Canada's largest and most diversified port, remains critical to our national transportation and trade system, and it could not be clearer that our government is committed to ensuring the reliability of Canada's Asia-Pacific gateway and the economic well-being of this great country.

As I conclude, I have an important question for the minister. Given the topic of much of my remarks, could the minister please update the House on our government's various actions with respect to the recent situation at Port Metro Vancouver?

● (2130)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as the hon. member has indicated, Port Metro Vancouver is absolutely critical to Canada's Asia-Pacific gateway. We have invested heavily in the Asia-Pacific gateway and it has been a great success. As we open up more markets through our unprecedented free trade deals, as we continue to responsibly develop our vast resources, we need to have a way to move these resources to that market and the Asia-Pacific gateway has been a stellar success.

Port Metro Vancouver is an important part of it. The port handled \$172 billion worth of cargo in 2013, a total number of jobs 100,000, with 38 million metric tonnes of coal or 40% of the total black cargo in 2013. These are all important things.

The specific question with respect to the trucks and the containers is one that is of great importance to us. It all commenced in February of this year with a protest that started on port property. We acted very quickly. We appointed Vince Ready to ensure that an independent review that was directed at resolving the concerns of truckers and stakeholders was undertaken.

We joined with the Province of British Columbia and Port Metro Vancouver soon after that to announce our action plan. An agreement on that action plan was reached between the governments of Canada and B.C., Port Metro Vancouver, and members of the United Truckers Association and Unifor in order to end that work disruption at Port Metro Vancouver in order to get to full operation. The port is at full operation.

Almost immediately the steering committee started meeting in order to ensure that the joint action plan was carried out. Meetings have been continuing on a weekly basis ever since. The obligations the federal government said it would undertake in this joint action plan have been carried out or are in the process of being carried out as we speak.

Most importantly, on May 2 of this year I announced with the Province of B.C. and Port Metro Vancouver joint funding for an expedited initiative to outfit the remainder of the container truck fleet approved to serve port terminals as part of Metro Vancouver's truck licensing system with GPS technology. This is the kind of implementation that is expedited and needed because it represents one point of the progress in the joint action plan.

We will continue to work. I will be meeting with Minister Stone on the topic. We have all hands on deck when it comes to ensuring that we have full service and full accessibility at Port Metro Vancouver. We will continue to be seized with the issue.

● (2135)

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Chair, I have an additional question for the minister.

We have spent a lot of time just in the last few moments talking about the importance of Port Metro Vancouver. Could the minister speak generally about the important role that all 18 ports and port authorities play in Canada's economic growth, job creation, and our long-term prosperity as a trading nation?

Business of Supply

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, an important decision was taken in terms of our transportation infrastructure and how we provide transportation in the country when we determined to go forward on a marketplace-based system. In doing so, a number of strong actions were taken. One of them was moving out of the Canadian ports corporation and into these free-standing, independent, self-financed, self-regulated port authorities, and it has been an incredible success when we look at what has been accomplished in moving to that model. We have seen an increase in productivity in the transportation sector of over 30%. Those are real and important gains to ensure efficiency in our transportation system that gives us that global competitive edge.

The ports are an integral part of our transportation sector, whether in St. John's, Newfoundland, Port Metro Vancouver, or Prince Rupert. They all listen to their local communities' needs and their wants in order to balance the economic and community benefits that they bring. Their focus, however, is on marine shipping and they continue to stay at the cutting edge of what is important.

Our world-class tanker safety system will work very well with what we are doing in ports. It is another step along the way to a modern marine system, one that is envied around the world.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I too would like to extend birthday wishes. It should have been happier circumstances. I too have spent birthdays in this place, so I wish the minister well after all of this is over.

I wish to advise that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst. I am hoping to take just seven and a half minutes of the 15 minutes, if you could let me know, Mr. Chair, when I am close to a minute left.

Given the potential magnitude of increased risk to human life and the environment from the massively expanded rail transport of petroleum products the government is allowing, why has the federal budget for rail safety remained stagnant?

• (2140)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, if we look over the past number of years what we will see is that there has been an increase in the spending on rail safety. Our government has put \$100 million in since 2009, based upon an analysis and study that we undertook in 2007.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, in fact it has been constant 2012 to 2015, so despite these incredibly awful incidents we have had, there has not been an increase in the allocation.

The recent thousandfold increase in shipping of oil by rail has become known as the pipeline on rails, yet no environmental assessments are required for this activity, unlike pipelines. The government has said it considers rail shipping of petroleum more risky than pipelines. Why does the minister not require open, public, environmental assessments of these activities?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as the hon. member will know, railways and railroads in our country are private and what they carry from shippers is their business, in terms of moving through. However, we have rules and regulations around the transportation of dangerous goods. We have rules and regulations around railway safety. We have taken unprecedented moves in the past nine months,

giving emergency orders and protective orders to ensure that safety is primary when we are talking about this increased risk. I agree, the more volume that is being shipped, the greater the risk. That is why we are acting so strongly to ensure that railways are doing the best they can. There are always going to be safety and environmental regulations that they will be subject to, as I mentioned, in terms of transportation of dangerous goods and railway safety.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, I am absolutely stunned at the response. In the 21st century it is astounding to hear the minister say that was always the way it was and it can self-regulate. This is the second time this evening that we have heard that the government is proud to say that its activities are self-regulated.

It may be noted that the budget forecast for 2014-15, in the report on plans and priorities, will reduce spending on environmental stewardship of transportation within the next two years by \$18,000.

Does the minister believe rail companies should be exempt from open public assessment of risk to human life or health, or the environment, to build and operate massive terminals for 24-hour loading of bitumen and other petroleum products into rail cars?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to the particular example the hon. member has given, I do believe that in order to construct anything in the country one probably has to do an environmental impact statement or a study, depending on who gives them the permit to do the construction in the area. It is not on federal land so I cannot speak to the details of it.

I can say this. In the operation of key trains, which includes even a single tank car of crude oil in this specific instance, we do demand that a risk assessment be taken into consideration. That would be carried out in consultation with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to make sure that they are doing what they can and have all the operating procedures to keep the train on the tracks as part of their operation.

Further, if the system is one in which the dangerous good, such as crude oil, is being loaded at a facility, our inspectors, under the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, can inspect the facilities as well.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, it is not very reassuring that the minister is simply saying she is assuming that it may or not be on the rail company's land. These are major facilities that are being built in my province, very close to the city of Edmonton. The municipalities are expressing concerns and I think it is time to step up and take a closer look at this. These are major activities that require environmental assessment.

When did the minister first know that there would be transportation bottlenecks in getting grain off the prairies and to market?

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Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, we became aware from CN and CP that they were having difficult winter conditions in January. We could also see it with the volumes of grain that were being moved in the country through our reporting mechanisms and we understood from them that it would be a stretch for them to move the amount of grain that was being cited simply because of the temperatures they were experiencing in various parts of the country, which debilitated their ability to run a full train. Instead they had to run smaller trains.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, today I was talking to one of the minister's colleagues from Alberta. He has been unable to get his grain off to market. We can only hope for better next year, but we cannot be assured. We just hope that more and more of our farmers will not go belly-up.

My next question is this. If the minister thinks the changes in Bill C-30 to deal with the grain crisis are important, why do they all have sunset clauses?

• (2145)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, this has been addressed before by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. The sunset clause is something that is administrative in nature and needed. Indeed that discussion happened at committee and that amendment was not passed.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, what measures did the minister take proactively to prevent the backlog?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, we always have conversations through officials and through ourselves with the railway companies as to the movement of goods in the country. After we realized that the difficulty was twofold, one being the amount of crop, the other being the difficulty in winter, we had meetings both with the grain companies as well as with CN and CP to determine the best way to move the maximum amount of grain in the shortest amount of time. That is exactly what we did with an incredible order, which had never before been done in Canada, with respect to the movement of a million tonnes of grain out of our country in a short period of time, with monitoring and reporting back to us as ministers.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, in light of these increases in oil tanker traffic on the west coast, could the minister confirm that Transport Canada projects further cuts to funding for marine safety of nearly \$6 million over the next two years?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, what the hon. member will note more importantly is the fact that we have increased our funding in this area by 686%. That has to do with our world-class tanker safety and the fact that we strongly believe, with increased activity on all of our coasts, we need to ensure we have a world-class system going forward. Any administrative cuts or decreases one would see were all activities that were back office and had nothing to do with safety.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to join the debate.

This must be the first time that so many NDP members have wished the minister a happy birthday. Once again, I would like to wish her a happy birthday.

How many railways for passenger transport does VIA Rail have in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: I am sorry, Mr. Chair. I honestly did not hear. I think there was a translation error there. Could the member say it again for me?

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, how many railways for passenger transport does VIA Rail have in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, the question I am hearing is how many railways are there for the intended transfer of VIA Rail passengers?

VIA Rail is the passenger train, the commuter train, that is a Canadian independent agency. There are other trains that provide passenger services. They are private I guess. One that comes to mind is Rocky Mountaineer on the west coast.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, welcome to the Supreme Court of Canada. I will try again.

[Translation]

How many railways for passenger transport does VIA Rail have in Canada?

How many railways belong to VIA Rail?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, VIA Rail is an independent agency that has and maintains passenger rail service and some tourism services in Canada. It has its own operation, management and administration and does so at arm's-length from the government.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, the information the minister does not have is that there are 19 railways in Canada. How many of them are protected by federal law?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to the number of federally regulated tier one railways that are non-passenger, it is two freight, which is CN and CP, as the hon. member probably knows.

With respect to other types of rail, it depends upon whether they are just provincially regulated or federally regulated. I think there is about 20 short line rail that may be federally regulated as well.

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• (2150)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, for the minister's information, none of VIA Rail's railways for passenger transport are protected by federal law. That is a huge problem.

How many of those railways for passenger transport have had their services cut over the past five years?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I do not have the information with respect to the VIA decisions operationally.

As I already indicated, it is an independent organization that takes its own administration and management of its services in accordance with what we set out as major transportation policy in the country.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, when did CN inform the government that it was planning to discontinue the rail line between Miramichi and Bathurst?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, in accordance with the Canadian Transportation Act, should a railway want to discontinue a line, like CN has indicated, in that part of the world, it has to give notice to all the parties. It did so in February of this year.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, has the government committed to working with CN in order to maintain passenger services between Montreal and Halifax?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, VIA makes its own decisions with respect to its service.

It has indicated to us the service levels it is providing with respect to the appropriations it receives from Parliament. There is the Ocean line, that the member refers to, that goes from Montreal to Halifax. There are various other lines in the country that operate as well within the envelope of funding that we provide.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, has the government considered providing funding to VIA Rail so that it can buy these rail lines itself? When will that funding be announced?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, VIA Rail does own some parts of rail. Mostly notably in Ottawa, it does own a stretch of rail on its own. It is VIA's own business decision to purchase that rail line.

With respect to the area, as the hon. member knows, I have met, through his invitation, with the mayors of the Richibucto and Petit-Rocher, and representatives from the Union of Quebec Municipalities to discuss this rail line.

I am happy to say that I have encouraged VIA and CN to talk with each other with respect to this rail line. Those conversations are happening.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell us that those conversations between VIA Rail and CN are encouraging for the people of New Brunswick, Quebec and all of eastern Canada?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, in contemplation of the work that CN had done with the province of New Brunswick, and already in consultation with the MPs that I work with on this side of the House from New Brunswick, it is important to ensure that a conversation between VIA and CN happens with respect to the possibility of this rail line coming into VIA's operation.

That matter is being discussed by VIA and CN. I am here and not at the table with them tonight.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, the government cut VIA Rail's budget by 6% in 2011, 15% in 2012, and 9% last year. How big will the cuts be this year?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I have indicated what the estimates are this year. There are approximately \$183 million, which is consistent with what we had sought in previous years.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Chair, is the minister not ashamed of her government?

CN itself recently announced it would invest \$30 million in the railway lines between Moncton and Campbellton. The province of New Brunswick, which, I am ashamed to say, is the poorest province in Canada, will invest \$25 million in the railway lines to ensure that New Brunswick keeps its rail service. The province is simply asking for \$10 million from the federal government.

Is the minister not ashamed that her government cannot tell the people of New Brunswick that they need not fear losing VIA Rail service in their region?

• (2155)

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, since 2006, our government has actually given VIA almost \$1 billion in capital funding, which is significant. We have invested heavily in VIA Rail in the past number of years, but VIA has to ensure it works to not be a burden on taxpayers.

The being said, with the discontinuance proceedings that are happening with this piece of rail, as the government, we have encouraged VIA to have the conversation with CN about this portion of track, give due consideration to what the member has said, and what my colleagues from New Brunswick also have said.

My role is to meet with the mayors, which I have done, to open up the chain of dialogue to ensure that we get to the right place in our decision-making and also accept whatever the decisions are made.

[Translation]

The Chair: That concludes this section.

The hon. member for Vancouver South.

Business of Supply

[English]

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to have the opportunity tonight to address the committee of the whole, but before I do so, I would like to join my many colleagues on both sides of the House to wish the minister a very happy birthday.

Our government understands the importance of transportation to Canada's economy. Marine transportation, in particular, plays a significant role in our ability to trade with international partners and to ship goods around the world. At a time when global trade and connectedness are increasingly necessary for economic growth, it is essential that marine activities be carried out safely and in an environmentally sound way.

This evening I would like to highlight Transport Canada's marine safety programs by providing a brief overview of their scope and purpose. These programs directly support the department's mandate for safe transportation as well as the Government of Canada's priority of having safe and secure communities.

Marine safety programs establish regulatory requirements that are harmonized with international standards for the safe and environmentally responsible operation of vessels in Canada. Marine safety also carries out compliance oversight activities, such as inspection and certification services, to help ensure compliance with requirements.

Requirements apply to the construction and operation of both commercial vehicles and pleasure craft and include the training and certification of seafarers who operate and maintain them. The effective implementation and management of these programs mean the Canadian public can have confidence in the marine sector in this country.

One key program is the domestic vessel regulatory oversight program, which is responsible for helping ensure that substandard Canadian-flag vessels do not operate. Inspection and certification activities are carried out by highly qualified Transport Canada marine safety inspectors or by representatives of qualified organizations that have been granted delegated authority. Under the delegated statutory inspection program, Transport Canada has entered into agreements with certain classification societies to perform statutory vessel inspection and certification functions.

Small commercial vessels, which make up a significant portion of the Canadian fleet, have unique safety and operational requirements that are addressed in a new program known as the small vessel compliance program, or SVCP. The SVCP helps inform the owners and operators of small commercial vessels of their regulatory obligations under the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, and to verify that their vessels meet them. This new program has proven to be a very successful way to enhance the safe operation of these vessels and to increase compliance.

Port state control is a ship inspection program that inspects foreign-flagged vessels in our waters. It is a way to ensure that foreign vessels calling at Canadian ports comply with major international maritime conventions, thereby enhancing safety and protecting the environment.

Transport Canada is also the lead federal department responsible for Canada's marine oil spill preparedness and response regime. This regime is in place to mitigate the impact of any marine pollution incidents in all Canadian waters. In this area, the department collaborates with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard, and Environment Canada to ensure preparedness and response to oil spills.

One important aspect of this regime is the national aerial surveillance program, or NASP. The program conducts aerial surveillance over all waters under Canadian jurisdiction using three aircraft with state-of-the-art remote sensing equipment that is so sensitive that it can detect marine oil spills as small as one litre. The information gathered is used to support enforcement action against polluters. Last winter, the minister actually participated in one of these surveillance flights. She saw first-hand that this is a very successful and worthwhile program.

As members are aware, our government is taking action to prevent marine oil spills from happening in the first place, to clean up spills quickly and effectively if they do happen, and to ensure that polluters pay.

• (2200)

The hon. Denis Lebel, in his prior capacity as Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, and the hon. Joe Oliver, in his prior capacity as Minister of Natural Resources, announced the strategy to implement the world-class tanker safety system in March of last year. This is a comprehensive interdepartmental strategy, led by Transport Canada, that includes initiatives by Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard, and Natural Resources Canada. With respect to preventing oil spills, we have put forward legislative amendments under Bill C-3 that would increase government oversight of oil-handling facilities, address issues of immunity for response organizations responding to a spill at one of these facilities, and strengthen requirements for pollution prevention and response at oil-handling facilities.

Other steps we have taken for which Transport Canada is responsible include increasing inspections of foreign tankers, reviewing existing pilotage and tug escort requirements, and launching the process to designate the Port of Kitimat public, which would require port traffic-control measures.

We have also expanded the coverage of the NASP to provide even better aerial surveillance. In addition, the Canadian Coast Guard has invested in new and enhanced aids to navigation that will help mariners avoid accidents and prevent oil spills. Our government has also taken action to better prepare for and respond to marine oil spills if they do happen. The Canadian Coast Guard has moved to establish an incident command system to respond more effectively to any incidents by coordinating the operations of partners. Environment Canada has completed a study into the behaviour of diluted bitumen. This work has increased our understanding of the potential effects of spills on marine ecosystems.

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We have also created the tanker safety expert panel to identify how the existing marine oil spill preparedness response regime can be further strengthened. The minister is now considering its recommendations on the current regime south of 60, and looks forward to the panel's second report on the regime in the Arctic and the marine transport of hazardous and noxious substances.

These are major steps, and I am proud that our government has delivered on the promises announced last year.

Finally, I would like to remind the members that marine safety is about more than just commercial shipping. We must also address recreational boating. Transport Canada's Office of Boating Safety, or the OBS, delivers programs that focus on prevention and that provide vital information for users and builders of recreational boats to enhance safety and reduce the environmental impacts of boating. Through the OBS, Transport Canada provides funding to organizations that promote boating safety or research ways to change people's behaviour on the water. These organizations have helped increase the number of boaters who follow safe boating practices. They also have contributed information about boating incidents that makes it possible for the OBS to set objectives to help reduce fatalities, injuries, and damage to property as a result of boating accidents.

The goal of the programs and measures I have outlined this evening is to help ensure that Canada benefits from the most effective marine safety system possible to protect people and the environment. Canadians can be confident that the minister's and Transport Canada's efforts are helping to make the marine transportation system in our country among the safest, most efficient, and most environmentally responsible in the world.

● (2205)

The Chair: Just before the member goes to questions, I would advise her and the rest of the House that although we are in committee of the whole, the requirement to address members of Parliament by their riding or ministerial status is still applicable here, and the use of personal names is not permissible.

The member for Vancouver South.

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Chair, I understand that last winter, the minister had the privilege of participating in one of the national aerial surveillance program flights. I wonder if she could talk about this experience for the rest of the House.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I take the opportunity to very much thank the hon. member for her good analysis and overview of what we are trying to do at Transport Canada with respect to marine safety. I would also note that next week is Safe Boating Week, and I think it is important that we remember safety in recreational boating too. People should wear their life jackets and make sure they have everything they need to have on board for recreational boating.

I had the opportunity, as the hon. member said, to take a flight with the national aerial surveillance program. This is a unique program. The United States does not have this program. We have invested in this program, and we will make sure we invest in it more so that they can actually increase the number of hours they are out there patrolling the skies and being our eyes in the skies.

Specifically, I was particularly pleased to note that two members of the crew were women, so they have a nice gender balance in this

program. It was very nice to be able to take off with them and to have the ability to view the paths of the vessels in the Vancouver area and to see the equipment they have, the sensor ability they have, the technology they have, and the skills they have to see both ships that are in distress and any spills, even as little, as was mentioned, as a litre of oil, because having that quick response is incredibly important.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time. We did not, unfortunately, see anything there with respect to any potential spills, but I can vouch for the absolute professionalism and the abilities of the crew on board this plane.

One other thing the crew told me was that it is such an incredibly valued program that they were the ones who were called upon by the United States to go down to the gulf to help be the eyes in the skies for the movement of oil on water when they had the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster, the oil spill in that part of the world. I am very proud of the work they did there and the commendations they have received as a result. We are very happy to make sure we continue to fund this program and increase the funding in the program so they can deliver not only on the west coast but also in the Arctic, and of course, on the east coast of Canada as well.

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Chair, could the minister also tell the House why the world-class tanker safety system we put forward is one of the top priorities of this government?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, fundamentally, we want to make sure that we are protecting the safety of Canadians and the safety of the environment, and as we make sure that we develop our resources responsibly and we open up those markets in other parts of the world, we want to transport our goods to market in the most environmentally responsible way. Part of that is with marine shipments. We know that as we increase the number of marine shipments through the west coast or the east coast, we will be faced with increased risk.

We want to ensure that we are ahead of that. That is why we asked for a panel, chaired by a very well-respected captain, Captain Gordon Houston, who used to be the chair and CEO of Port Metro Vancouver, to look at what we currently have in terms of response and in terms of the system to take a safe system and make it even safer. He and his panel had 45 recommendations for the government, and we are taking them under due consideration and are ensuring that we consult with communities and get to the right place.

The importance of the world-class tanker is not just whether we are doing things as best we can for Canada. It is our reputation as well. It is world class for a reason. We are leading the world, when it comes to this kind of development, in ensuring that our marine transportation is as clean as possible and as safe as possible, and in the case of a spill, that we can respond to it as quickly as possible. The final piece is that the polluter is the one who pays and not the Canadian taxpayer.

● (2210)

The Chair: That now completes that segment. The hon. member for Ottawa South.

Business of Supply

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, you may assert that Canada is leading the world in terms of safety when it comes to transport, but let us actually look at what your own inspectors in your department are telling you.

I raised with you earlier the recent survey of aviation inspectors who work for Transport Canada. Nine in ten of those aviation inspectors in your department who work for you tell us that Transport Canada's safety management system—

The Chair: The hon. member for Ottawa South has been here a long time. He knows to address his comments through the Chair, not directly to the minister.

Mr. David McGuinty: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and forgive me. Nine in ten aviation inspectors who work at Transport Canada tell us that Transport Canada's safety management systems prevent the correction of safety problems in a timely fashion, up from 80% who worry this would be the case in the early days of the safety management system. Two-thirds of the minister's own inspectors are telling her that Transport Canada's safety management systems will actually increase the chances of a major aviation accident.

How should Canadians interpret this?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as I have indicated before, in the aviation field on itself we have already indicated that the number of accidents has decreased. The foundation of which we have approached safety with respect to airline safety for many years now is through safety management systems. It is renowned as the leading way to deal with it.

Indeed, the chair of the Transportation Safety Board, Wendy Tadros, said that they are “a powerful, internationally recognized management tool to help organizations find trouble before trouble finds them”. She also said, “SMS is the right way to go”.

Quite frankly, that is exactly the direction we will continue to move in. With the recommendations from the Auditor General, we continue to ensure we give all the training and the equipment we can to our auditors to carry out the duties they should do under SMS.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, just before the Lac-Mégantic derailment, the minister's department appointed a licensed airline pilot to act as the manager of enforcement of rail safety regulations, an airline pilot in the Quebec region. The new policy that allowed this to happen will also result in the appointment of enforcement managers for aviation safety who have no aviation background or knowledge whatsoever.

Could the minister explain how it is a good idea to place managers in charge of enforcing safety regulations in modes of transportation that they know absolutely nothing about?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I do not know what the hon. member has against pilots, but they are well trained and they can absolutely be trained in other fields as well I am sure.

With respect to air safety in general, despite substantial increases in traffic, Canada actually boasts the lowest rate of accidents in the modern era. Regardless if someone is a pilot, or a teamster, or a marine operator, the fundamental aspect in transportation that runs through all of these is adherence to safety standards, and that is understood in whatever mode of transportation one is in.

Transport Canada inspectors have small and large airlines that they inspect thousands of times per year, and the proof of the pudding is this. Aviation accidents in Canada have actually decreased by 25% in the last decade and are now at an all time low. The safety of Canadians is our top priority and we, through Transport Canada, continue to deliver on that.

Mr. David McGuinty: In fact, Mr. Chair, I guess it is so safe in Canada to fly that under the Conservative government, the Conference Board now concludes that Canadians are taking five million flights a year from the United States airports. That number is going up 10% to 15% each and every year under the Conservative administration. Canadians are driving to the United States and they are creating jobs and economic activity in U.S. airports.

What has the minister done to fix this?

• (2215)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, many years ago, the airports that were under the control of Transport Canada were divested into airport authorities. They were put into the hands of local communities through a ground lease to ensure that the development, the management, the marketing of these airports were done by local community members on a smaller scale, and it has proven to be very successful. Airport authorities are the ones that set their charges. They are the ones that set their rates. They are the ones that ensure airlines come in and fly out and that passengers make it to them.

Our government has made some substantial infrastructure investments in and around airports in Canada through our economic action plans because we recognize the importance of air transport to a greater economy and to a better economy. While we focus on safety and security, we also want to ensure that as part of our entire economic plan, we want to include the air sector as part of that. My Transport Department has done an excellent job of analyzing air sector service needs and it will report to me in the future with respect to the outcomes and the analysis.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, what Canadians heard is that the minister is not responsible for this, and she has done absolutely nothing to lower costs to make our Canadian airports more competitive.

I would like to go back to rail safety, and I want to rely on the most objective document produced in the last two years in Canada, which is the report of the Auditor General, on rail safety. I want to review for Canadians a number of the Auditor General's key findings and conclusions.

First, the Auditor General and his team audited a three-year period at Transport Canada, which is this minister's department. She is the fifth minister in eight years, transiting through, I guess in terms of this cabinet, either up, down, or out.

Business of Supply

However, the Auditor General's report on whether federal railways have actually implemented safety management systems states that "Transport Canada has yet to establish an audit approach that provides a minimum level of assurance that federal railways have done so".

That is number one, which flies in the face of the minister's assertion that there are SMSs as a world-class system in place.

Two, on safety, the Auditor General says that Transport Canada does not have clear timelines. The report states: "We found that the work plans are vague in terms of timelines for monitoring progress on important safety issues".

Three, critical information is not available at Transport Canada. It cannot deliver up risk assessments. It cannot give us information on the sections of track used in transporting dangerous goods; and I think of Lac-Mégantic. It cannot give us information on the condition of railway bridges. It cannot give us financial information of privately owned federal railways not publicly available.

The Auditor General then tells us that Transport Canada, in the three fiscal years that were audited, actually only performed 14 audits. That is 14 audits when they themselves said that only constituted 25% of the audits that they said had to be done in order to keep rail safe in this country. In fact, in that three-year period, VIA Rail, which carries four million passengers a year, was not audited once.

Not once.

I asked the minister earlier about qualified inspectors. In 2009, Transport Canada said that it needed 20 system auditors to audit each railway once every three years. How many were in place? There were only 10, half of what is required.

Next, the Auditor General tells us that Transport Canada does not know whether its current staff of inspectors have the required skills and competencies to do their jobs: "Inspectors and managers were not trained on a timely basis".

The Auditor General says that they cannot even warrant that inspectors are objective and independent because they are coming from the private sector and mainly from federal railways.

This is a scathing indictment of the last eight years, and five ministers, on rail safety. However, when we listen to the minister speak, all is good with rail safety, apparently.

Can the minister explain to Canadians how it is possible that these findings are so serious that at committee, the Auditor General stated clearly that he is going to be adding another interim report to examine how much progress has been made under the current government.

• (2220)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, first of all, let me quote from the Auditor General's report in general, where it states that: "We did not examine the safety of federal and other railways' operations. We also did not examine the overall safety of Canada's rail industry".

I stand by my comments about the safety of our rail industry and the importance of making it safer.

With respect to the recommendations, we did thank the Auditor General for his report and his recommendations because, clearly, a 26% audit is unacceptable. That is why the department was asked for a rail safety Office of the Auditor General action plan, which I have a copy of. The department is marked against it in terms of benchmarking. It has provided complete timelines; timely completion dates, which are needed; and it is monitored by me and my office on an ongoing basis.

With respect to audits and auditors in training, in the spring of this year, all 100 inspectors will have the ability to conduct audits and they will be trained up. We will continue to hit those marks of 30,000-plus inspections each year, which are inspections that are exceeding greatly what we have done in the past.

I can tell members that I said, when this report came out first in November, that should the department not be adhering to its action plan, I would not hesitate to ask the Auditor General to come back to review to ensure that this work is carried out. I stand by that statement now as well.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, Canadians are finding out that crude oil shipped by rail in Canada has increased 32,000% since 2009. The Conservative government has known for eight years. I am absolutely certain that in the transition documents that were prepared for the minister's predecessor, the government was forewarned about this massive increase in the transportation of dangerous goods by rail. The present minister knows, and so does the Prime Minister, that in the next 10 years if every pipeline as proposed for our country is built and in full usage, there will be a million barrels per day of excess oil production in Canada. How is it going to be transported? It is going to be transported by rail.

Instead of taking the Auditor General's report, thanking him for his good work and sending him on his way, could the minister explain why there is no sense of urgency in the wake of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy? In the face of this massive increase in the transportation of dangerous goods, diluted bitumen by rail, why has there been no significant increase in expenditures for rail safety? We know from the public accounts of 2012-13, VIA Rail was cut 15%, aviation safety was cut 11%, marine safety was cut 25%, road safety was cut 5.5% and rail safety remained relatively constant.

I would remind Canadians before the minister responds that the government spends more money on economic action plans, obscene, self-promoting economic action plan advertisements, than it does on rail safety.

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Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as I have already indicated, what the main estimates will show us is that aviation safety decreased as a result of a transfer of the airports capital assistance sub-program. It is not because of what the member said.

In terms of any reductions in either marine safety or in rail safety, they have all been administrative matters. They have nothing to do with safety. We would never cut inspector positions as a result.

With respect to rail safety, we started in 2007 on this path by studying rail. We are the ones who brought forward amendments to the Railway Safety Act. Yes, they were passed by everybody, but we moved them forward because we wanted to make it a safer system, recognizing it is safe. In fact, it has been quoted as being safe even by the former member for Trinity—Spadina, who said, “Shipping materials by train are...very safe and the record is really quite good”. She said that in October 2013, recognizing that the system was safe, and I agree with her on that topic.

We want to make it safer and we are reacting to what the Transportation Safety Board is indicating to us as it unfolds what happened at Lac-Mégantic.

We have indicated protective directives need to be in place on sharing information with municipalities to deal with first responder issues.

We also made a protective directive with respect to prosper classification, knowing that this crude oil in particular was very unique and very different in the way it reacted.

We also directed, through a protective direction, to require shippers to develop ERAPs for the flammable liquids that I noted before. I have set up an ERAP task force. I have reached out to industry. We have had working groups.

We have been on this issue since we became government. We have never relented on this issue. We absolutely believe in the health and safety of Canadians. We will do all we can to ensure that Canadians are safe and that we get our goods to market at the same time.

• (2225)

The Chair: That concludes that segment.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Chair, I too would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the minister's birthday today and wish her the best. Hopefully she will have a much better celebration in one of the nights to come, because this is not a great way to celebrate one's birthday.

That being said, Canada's rail system has been central to the development of this country. There are some 48,000 kilometres of track, enough to go around the world. We have one of the largest rail networks on the globe.

Rail has connected Canadians to each other and, by transporting Canadian goods to markets, is crucial to our economic prosperity. Some 70% of our surface freight moves by rail, including bulk commodities such as agricultural and forestry products, minerals, and energy products, including oil.

In recent years, more than 40% of our gross domestic product has been generated by bulk commodities. We use rail to move what are called dangerous goods. Dangerous goods play a vital role in the North American economy, but they are substances that could pose a threat to people or the environment. These shipments include oil and gas.

Every day such shipments move routinely and safely across Canada by rail without incident. Canadians depend on many of these goods to go about their daily lives. In fact, more than 30 million shipments of dangerous goods are transported annually in this country. Let me note again that almost all their destinations are reached without incident.

However, this past summer a tragic incident did occur. On July 6, an unmanned Montreal, Maine and Atlantic train containing crude oil derailed in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec. The explosion and fire that followed killed 47 people, caused significant damage to the town, and released more than five million litres of crude oil. The events in Lac-Mégantic underline the ongoing need for rail safety.

An on-site investigation was immediately launched by the Transportation Safety Board of Canada. The TSB provides an extremely valuable service to the government and Canadians. It operates independently of the government and makes recommendations following investigations into transportation incidents.

Earlier this year, the TSB made interim recommendations based on its ongoing investigation into the tragic Lac-Mégantic incident. Our government took decisive action to address the TSB recommendations.

Just recently, the Minister of Transport directed her department to further strengthen rail safety in Canada by removing the least crash-resistant DOT-111 tank cars from service; requiring DOT-111 tank cars that do not meet the standard published in January 2014 in *Canada Gazette* part 1 or any other future standard to be phased out within three years; requiring emergency response assistance plans for even a single tank car containing crude oil, gasoline, diesel, aviation fuel, or ethanol; creating a task force that brings municipalities, first responders, railways, and shippers together to strengthen emergency response capacity across the country; and requiring railway companies to reduce the speed of trains carrying dangerous goods and to implement other key operating practices.

However, I should note, given the integration of Canada and U.S. rail networks, that rail cars cross the border both ways every day, so we also require a North American solution. When it comes to developing a new standard for rail cars, we do not exist in isolation and must consider our training partners in the United States.

As such, the Minister of Transport continues to work with her American counterpart to accelerate the development of even more stringent standards in keeping with the TSB recommendations.

Business of Supply

In addition, here in Parliament the minister has asked the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to review safety management systems for railways and the transport of dangerous goods. I mention this because I want to point out that Canada has in fact paid attention to safety in rail transportation. Those who say otherwise need to examine the facts.

In addition to the actions I have mentioned, our government is also taking other steps to address this important issue. On sharing TDG information with municipalities, the minister has stated that our government remains committed to a two-way dialogue and information exchange with key transportation stakeholders in communities across Canada. A protective direction was issued to make sure this happened.

On classification of dangerous goods, the minister announced a directive to ensure that all crude oil being transported is properly tested and classified and that results are sent to Transport Canada.

• (2230)

This provides Transport Canada with an additional means to monitor industry compliance and focus our efforts for the greatest safety benefit of Canadians.

When we look at all these actions together, we can see that our government is taking an approach that is similar to the world-class tanker safety initiative that we developed for marine transportation. It focuses on prevention, response, and liability.

Our government is committed to rail safety and, prior to this tragedy, took numerous other actions to strengthen it. It is worth noting some of them.

In 2009, we increased funding to ensure a permanent rail inspectorate of over 100 positions nationally. By last spring, Transport Canada had 101 railway safety inspectors and 35 dangerous goods inspectors. It has implemented a new, aggressive staffing plan to increase oversight capacity. For example, between April 1, 2012 and March 31, 2013, rail safety inspectors conducted more than 30,000 inspections. Our government has also invested more than \$100 million in the rail safety system.

We have also taken legislative steps. Last year, final amendments to the Railway Safety Act went into effect, providing the authority to introduce new regulations to strengthen safety and oversight programs. These new regulations include increased fines for companies that break rules, a requirement that rail carriers submit environmental management plans, the creation of whistle-blower protection for employees with safety concerns, and a call for rail companies to have an executive legally responsible for safety.

I want to also note other measures we took immediately following the events in Lac-Mégantic. The Minister of Transport directed her department to issue an emergency directive to rail companies, with five requirements: two operators are required at all times for trains carrying dangerous goods; all cabins must be locked; all reverses must be removed from locomotives; all brakes must be properly applied on all locomotives; and no trains can be left unattended without new strict conditions. Our government made these rules permanent.

These actions would build on steps that Transport Canada is also taking to bolster the safety of our rails and the transportation of dangerous goods. To this end, we have said we will work to enhance the collection of safety data and the tools to analyze safety risks and improve and expand the fleet of vehicles used to assess rail tracks. We will improve how information about dangerous goods shipments is shared with municipalities, conduct research to support safety technologies, promote a culture of safety in the rail industry, and continue to work with communities across Canada and groups such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to further support the work of municipal emergency preparedness officials and first responders.

We also continue to strengthen rail safety through other actions. That is why, even before the investigations into this tragedy were completed, the minister directed officials in her department to speed up development and implementation of regulations that reflect recent amendments to the Railway Safety Act. In doing so, there are several questions we need to consider. For example, do our current regimes and options adequately reflect risks of transporting crude oil and other dangerous goods? As we did in developing the world-class tanker safety regime, should we reassess the liability and compensation regime for rail transport to better protect victims, the environment, and taxpayers?

Given the integration of the Canada-U.S. rail network, and in order to improve rail efficiency together, we should work to develop a new continental co-operation on rail safety.

As I noted earlier, we are already doing some of these.

As a first step, the Canadian Transportation Agency is reviewing its insurance assessment criteria and will take actions permitted under existing legislation. As well, Transport Canada will review how much insurance may be required in order to adequately compensate people and pay for cleanups after accidents. From that, we expect to bring forward options to improve this regime and ensure it adequately reflects the risks of transporting crude and other dangerous goods.

Beyond what government can do with its own powers, we must also encourage transportation businesses to encourage a culture of safety in their everyday operations, and the sense among employees that they can all contribute to safe operations. By accomplishing this, these businesses can maintain government's trust and have confidence that we will support their enterprise.

Business of Supply

• (2235)

In conclusion, let me make a couple of key points. First, railway safety regulations exist to ensure the safety and protection of the public. If these regulations are not followed, we will not hesitate to act, and if companies do not properly classify the goods they transport, they may be prosecuted under the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act.

Second, Canada has a robust and safe transportation system, one in which we can have confidence. The facts demonstrate that Canada is pursuing rail safety and that our record has improved in recent years. However, events in Lac-Mégantic remind us that we must remain committed to strengthening rail safety. To do so, we will learn from recent events and work with all stakeholders in rail transportation to ensure the safety of our rail system for Canadians.

We recognize that there is still some work to do, and we remain committed to working with the rail industry, governments, and partners such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to improve the safety of our rail and transportation of dangerous goods systems.

With that, I have a question for the minister. I was wondering if the minister could comment on whether, in light of what I have said in my speech, she is confident in the direction we are taking and whether it will maintain the safety of our transportation and trade system.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the comments and the review of all we have accomplished and all we have tried to do with respect to rail safety over the past number of years. Of course, we can always do better. We will always strive to do better, and we will continue to take that path at Transport Canada. That being said, I am satisfied with the reaction we have been receiving to all of these protective directions, emergency orders, and regulations we are putting in place or announcing.

I will take a moment to show that it is not just internally that we should be happy with ourselves. Externally we have heard from people like Claude Dauphin, president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, who stated:

FCM applauds the federal government's response to the tragedy in Lac Mégantic and to the rail safety recommendations that emerged from it.

He went on to say:

The government's commitment to increase the safety of the transportation of dangerous goods, and to require shippers and railways to carry additional insurance, directly respond to calls from FCM's national rail safety working group.

As well, it is important to note that Rebecca Blaikie, who is the NDP president, said on April 23, in response to our comments to the Transportation Safety Board, that she thinks this is a step in the right direction. She said she was glad to see the government taking action.

The member for Brossard—La Prairie also said:

It is a good move. It is a step in the right direction.

He also said that the three-year period is the best thing that can be done.

The mayor of Lac-Mégantic, with whom we have a very good relationship, a respectful one, and it is important for us to consult with her, as she is the centre of so much of what's been happening

recently in rail safety, said she was satisfied with the new measures from the federal government.

The chair of the Transportation Safety Board said she was encouraged by our strong response to the board recommendations.

Claude Dauphin also said:

The new safety measures announced today respond directly to our call for concrete action and are another major step forward in improving the safety of Canada's railways and the communities around them.

I also want to thank the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, which commended us for requiring emergency response assistance plans for the shipment of crude oil, ethanol, and other flammable liquids by rail. It is something they asked for. We are continually encouraged by the fact that they will work with us on this matter as we move forward.

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Mr. Chair, I would ask if the minister could also expand on the regulatory changes she announced last month in response to the TSB's interim findings on the Lac-Mégantic tragedy.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, we acted decisively on April 23 and made our recommendations in response to the Transportation Safety Board.

Today the U.S. department of transport brought in its emergency actions, which mirror ours in some cases. I can say that in comparison with the Canadian position, Canada's actions go further than both of the advisories the U.S. put out today.

• (2240)

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to wish the minister a happy birthday, to start.

[*Translation*]

Is the minister aware that the government has cut almost 20% of the approved check pilots responsible for oversight and air safety since coming to power in 2007?

Does she find that alarming?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, what I can say is what I have reiterated before. In aviation safety, what we see as a decrease is predominantly a result of the transfer of the airport's capital assistance subprogram to reflect a new architecture or a new structure within Transport Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, what I want to say to the minister is that there are 80 fewer check pilots than there were in 2007. That is alarming. It is up to these check pilots to ensure that companies obey safety rules.

How many approved check pilot positions were eliminated at Transport Canada in 2013?

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[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to the information on aviation, I indicated before that the total number of oversight positions in 2013-14 is 1,778 in civil aviation, which far exceeds the 1,400 that were there in 2012 and 2013.

These are the numbers I have, and as I said before, we have not made any cuts to aviation safety.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, I would like to say to the minister that 15 check pilot positions were eliminated last year. In fact, 85% of check pilots believe that air passengers have been exposed to greater risks because of Transport Canada's aviation safety management practices.

Has the minister read or been informed of the results of the recent survey of Transport Canada inspectors?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to the inspections that are carried out in the aviation sector, the kinds of things that are looked at are regulatory compliance. We do it through oversight activities, including inspections, to which the member is referring.

We do have airline inspectors, who inspect both small airlines and large airlines. They are an important part of our system to ensure that there are safety nets. I mentioned before that it is working because we have seen a decrease in aviation accidents in this country over the past number of years.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, I would like to say to the minister that, in this survey, two-thirds of the respondents believe that Transport Canada's safety management system will increase the risk of serious aviation accidents.

What measures has the minister implemented in the wake of the study conducted by her own inspectors?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as I have indicated before, the change to safety management systems took place a number of years ago. Transport Canada continues to implement those systems, but this is a system that is adopted by the industry, both in air and in rail.

What is important in these systems is making sure that the culture of safety is embedded within the framework. People are thinking about safety as part of their day, as part of their lives at the company, and it has been working. It has been said by the Transportation Safety Board chair that it is the way to go. As I have indicated, we have seen a decrease in aviation accidents in Canada.

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the minister this. Why has the Government of Canada cut \$7 million from the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority at a time when we should be increasing safety at airports?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, CATSA, like every other organization within the government, went through a strategic review with respect to its back office operations. It did not have an effect on any front-line operations. CATSA continues to operate to ensure security and ensure that passengers are safe at our airports.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, does the government collect revenue from the air travellers security charge on Canadian flights?

Can the minister confirm that 100% of this money is spent on airport security and that it is not paid into the government's general revenues?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to CATSA, we can see that it is a complex assessment for the funds that are being sought this year, seeking access to \$591 million approximately. That goes into three areas, which are pre-board screening, hold-baggage screening, and non-passenger screening.

On restricted area identity cards, CATSA indicates this is the money that it needs in order to ensure that it continues to fulfill the policy obligations that we have put upon it as Transport Canada.

● (2245)

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, does the minister believe that fewer flight attendants on airplanes means reduced safety for passengers? I would like a short answer, please.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, the one in 50 standard is accepted by international and U.S. carriers. However, that being said, the rule in Canada right now is one in 40. We are currently in a consultation period in which we will be looking for comments from industry and specifically flight attendants with respect to this issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, the question is simple and the answer is, too. Of course reducing the ratio of flight attendants per number of seats will reduce safety.

Does the minister believe that there should be a science-based assessment before we change the ratio of flight attendants to passengers on airplanes?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, whenever we grant an exemption to an existing rule, there is an analysis that has taken place from a safety perspective, and that is what has happened in the past with respect to exemptions for WestJet and Sunwing. Currently we are in a process where we are taking a look at whether this regulation needs to be amended. We are seeking consultation on the matter to ensure we are abiding by what happens with carriers in the United States and in Europe. As well, a ratio that is recognized by ICAO is providing the same level of safety.

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, does the minister agree that one big consultation on something as important as changing flight attendant regulations is insufficient?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I am satisfied with the work that the officials in the department have been doing with respect to this matter in analyzing. I expect that the consultation period will follow the consultations that are always carried out on these regulatory matters.

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[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, before changing the ratio to 1 in 50, will the minister agree to ask the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to conduct a study on this subject, as the Conservatives unanimously agreed to do in 2005?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I have already asked the committee to study SMS as it applies to the transportation of dangerous goods in all modes of transport. I want an interim report from it in June. I know the committee members are seized with the issue right now and I look forward to their findings in that matter.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, the regulation that Transport Canada is proposing for flight attendants is not as stringent as the recommendation made by Transport Canada's senior managers in 2004 and 2006, which was rejected by two of the minister's predecessors.

Can the minister explain how something that was considered unsafe in 2004 is safe now, 10 years later?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as I have indicated already, the one-in-fifty flight attendant ratio is the standard in the U.S. and Europe. It is one that is used every day. It is also the ratio that is recognized by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

However, that is not the standard in Canada today. We are taking a look at this regulation. We are going through the proper analysis, as officials will do. They are also reaching out to industry for consultation because we directed that to happen. Once that process is complete, the package will be brought to me for consideration. At that point in time, a decision will be made.

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, Canada is a leader. It does not make sense or make it safer to say Europe and the U.S. do that.

Does the minister agree it would be inappropriate to have temporary foreign workers preparing food for flights in Canada without proper security clearances?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to people who work on the air side of airport of operations, they have to receive accreditation from Transport Canada through use of a card or they have to go through a screening process to get through. Those things are in place and they are part of our everyday lives in airports across Canada.

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, could the minister confirm if this is the case at any of Canada's airports and does the minister agree that all food preparation staff should have proper security clearances?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as I said, the one fundamental piece of being able to work on air side operations is that those workers have either gone through a screening process or they have a card that allows them to access those areas. That process is handled by Transport Canada. It is taken very seriously because it is a matter of security.

What the status of individuals is regarding the nature of their residency in Canada, I do not know what the particular aspects of it are. It is something that would be taken into consideration by

officials and they would deal with it in the way in which they deal with all applications.

• (2250)

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, does the minister agree with her colleague responsible for infrastructure that officials should not move too quickly to demolish the Mirabel terminal and that all the partners should work together to find a solution?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, the Mirabel terminal is in the hands of the Aéroports de Montréal. It has been in its hands since the ground lease was given to it by Transport Canada. The property is owned by us, but airport officials can make the decisions with respect to the operation on their own. I understand the association officials have been having conversation with the local mayors. I encourage that, but at the end of the day, it is their decision on how to proceed with respect to this.

Since 2004, when passenger service ceased at Mirabel Airport, they have been attempting to utilize this asset and generate an economy from it, but have been unable to do so and have indicated that this is the direction they want to move in.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, while the City of Mirabel, the CMM, the chambers of commerce, the CRÉ des Laurentides, the Table des préfets et élus de la couronne Nord and all local stakeholders are trying to find a new use for the facilities, ADM is saying that they should be demolished.

Is the minister prepared to work with the community to convert the Mirabel terminal?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, again, this is really for the Aéroports de Montréal group to deal with because they are ones that have the responsibility for this terminal and for the decisions around this terminal. I would note that what they have said, that their decision was taken, was because of high maintenance costs, facilities were unfit for current commercial aviation needs, and the lack of economic viability for this terminal. That is what led them to make this decision, but as I said, I understand them having discussions with local mayors and I wish them the best in their discussions.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, in 2013, Aéroports de Montréal submitted to Transport Canada 24 files regarding breaches of the procedures and rules with respect to the management of air traffic noise.

What types of breaches were these? Can the minister tell us what kind of action was taken on each of these files?

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[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I will follow that up with my officials. I do not have that information right now.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, I will then wait for the minister to follow up.

An increasing number of Canadians who live east of the Trudeau airport, outside the NEF-30 contour perimeter, have been complaining about aircraft noise, particularly at night.

When will Transport Canada review its system for collecting noise data and reconsider its noise exposure forecast system to take into account the disturbance to people in that area?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as the hon. member knows, Aéroports de Montréal has a noise committee that is very engaged in the community with respect to the issues associated with it. I know that Nav Canada would be involved as well as airlines. Really that is the best discussion place for that to happen, within that community.

As I said, I encourage the independent body Aéroports de Montréal to continue its discussions with neighbours and communities with respect to the management of noise in the area. It is an important part of an airport and it is important that they have these discussions.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, I think it is very important for the government to play an active role in this regard since this is a growing issue on the Island of Montreal.

A total of 74% of Canadians, including 68% of Conservative voters, say that the federal government's decision to reduce the number of flight attendants will have a negative impact on passenger safety.

Who is the minister protecting, Canadian passengers or the airlines?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as I have indicated before, the 1:50 proposed ratio is one that is accepted by ICAO, it is one that is used in the U.S. and Europe. We are now currently in a process of determining whether we move from a 1:40 to a 1:50 flight attendant ratio.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Chair, 9 out of 10 inspectors believe that Transport Canada's safety management system makes it impossible to fix safety problems within a reasonable time. That is 80% more than the number of inspectors who were concerned that this would be the case when the safety management systems were first implemented.

Does the minister find these results alarming? Why do the department's own inspectors have so little faith in the security procedures?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, one thing that has become clear is the reality that Transport Canada, its officials and ourselves need to work very hard to ensure that we are doing everything we can to respond to the Auditor General's report with respect to the implementation of SMS and the oversight activity. We will continue to do that.

As I have said, we will have 100% compliance in terms of training this spring with respect to that. Specifically the number of oversight positions and the amount of oversight in civil aviation is a significant number of positions. It is almost 1,800 positions in total. Civil aviation is 1,100 of that and the balance is made up of marine safety, rail safety, and transportation of dangerous goods.

It is incredibly important to note that safety and the safe passage of transport and passengers is always at the core of what Transport Canada does. That is what these inspectors do. We want them to work within the safety management systems because that has been indicated and in fact is the international standard and the one that we should be trying to achieve.

● (2255)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is my pleasure to speak to the House today—

The Chair: Will the member be using ten minutes for his speech and five minutes for questions?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: That is right, Mr. Chair.

It is my pleasure to speak to the House tonight on the help the federal government provides to municipalities and first responders.

First responders are the front line in public safety and when an emergency occurs, multiple 911 calls flow into municipal emergency centres. This begins the all-important response by police, fire, and ambulance personnel to the scene of the incident. Without this vital safety link, Canadians' lives would be placed further at risk.

That is why our government recognizes the importance of proper first responder capability and has provided assistance to municipalities to ensure that Canadians have access to the support they require following an incident related to the transportation of dangerous goods.

For example, our government has allocated funding to support municipalities, and a portion of that funding is being provided by Public Safety Canada toward helping in the response and recovery in Lac-Mégantic.

By their very nature, the vast majority of emergencies in this country are dealt with at the local level; by provincial, territorial, and municipal governments. Under Canada's emergency management system, first responders and provincial officials are responsible for addressing the immediate needs of their residents in times of disaster. However, the federal government can and does play an important role through the disaster financial assistance agreements, particularly when communities are devastated by a large-scale natural disaster.

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These arrangements were put in place to provide financial assistance to provinces and territories, on a cost-shared basis, when response and recovery costs for a natural disaster exceed what they could reasonably be expected to bear on their own. Through this program, our government has provided more than \$2.5 billion in post-disaster assistance to help provinces and territories with the costs of response and of restoring infrastructure and personal property to pre-disaster condition.

However, as we learned last summer, our communities can be shattered by incidents that do not fall into the category of large-scale natural disasters. The unprecedented nature of the Lac-Mégantic tragedy was such that our government was compelled to find an exceptional and rapid funding response. In the face of such a devastating and immediate impact, it was clear that there was no time to waste. The priority was to deliver immediate help to the people whose lives had been ripped apart. With its commitment to provide \$60 million to the province of Quebec, that is exactly what our government did. Since then, we have also provided up to \$95 million to help with the decontamination of the water and soil.

In addition, to help meet this extraordinary need, Public Safety Canada committed to provide \$25 million of the total funds, to help the Province of Quebec in its immediate response and recovery efforts, as well as to help repair, rebuild, and restore this devastated community.

The funds provided could be directed to a number of eligible costs, which would include: the delivery of emergency services; rescue, transportation, and emergency food and shelter; the registration of people who were displaced from their homes due to the destruction; incremental short-term security measures, including removing valuable assets and hazardous material from the sites; emergency provision of essential community services; the removal of damaged structures that constituted a threat to public safety; repairs to public infrastructure, such as roads and bridges; and finally, the cleanup costs.

Since this announcement, our government continues to work with officials in the Province of Quebec and Lac-Mégantic to ensure that provincial requests for federal assistance are handled without delay. The health and safety of Canadians is our government's top priority, and this funding is just another example of how we are working closely with the provinces and territories to assist Canadians when large disasters strike.

We continue to support first responders to make sure they have access to information that may assist them in dealing with an incident.

That is why on November 20, 2013, my colleague the hon. Minister of Transport took action to make sure that municipalities and first responders have access to information about dangerous goods that flow through their communities. This government has obligated industry to provide municipal emergency planners and first responders with the information they need to conduct proper risk assessments, emergency planning, and first-responder training.

• (2300)

Moreover, the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992, provides the federal government with the necessary authorities to

develop policy, verify compliance, conduct research to enhance safety, guide emergency response, and develop regulations and standards to manage risk during the transportation of dangerous goods.

To further help municipalities deal with an emergency, the transportation of dangerous goods directorate within Transport Canada, operates the Canadian Transport Emergency Centre, CANUTEC, to assist emergency response personnel in handling dangerous goods emergencies. This world-renowned centre is staffed by bilingual professional scientists, specialized in emergency response and experienced in interpreting technical information and providing advice to first responders.

The centre operates 24 hours a day and handles some 30,000 phone calls a year related to safety. Delegations from around the world regularly visit CANUTEC to incorporate Canadian practices into their own countries' dangerous goods programs.

CANUTEC was involved immediately after the incident in Lac-Mégantic, providing first responders involved in the tragic incident with information regarding potential hazards of the dangerous goods, evacuation distance, train consist information, and protective clothing requirements, among others.

First responders regularly communicate the importance and necessity of CANUTEC to help them accomplish their response work and to understand the risks associated with the transportation of dangerous goods. CANUTEC also offers first responders access to immediate dangerous goods information following an incident.

A rail operator is required by regulation to provide CANUTEC with the train consist immediately following an incident. This train consist provides first responders with detailed information on the specific products the train in question was transporting, beyond the general information provided by the placards on the cars. This is much more detailed information.

It allows CANUTEC specialists to target detailed advice on handling products, which may have spilled and mixed, or recommended initial evacuation zones. It enables them to understand immediately what risks they face when they are involved in an incident.

This existing requirement for immediate information to be provided to first responders through CANUTEC, in combination with the new requirements to provide municipalities with historical information through the protective direction, demonstrates our government's commitment to support first responders with the information they require to respond to a dangerous goods incident.

We are fortunate. Anyone involved in emergency response and the transportation of dangerous goods safety knows the importance of CANUTEC and its emergency response guidebook. This guidebook, produced by Transport Canada, helps first responders, police, fire, ambulance and paramedics, to respond and protect Canadians during the initial phase of a dangerous goods incident.

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The emergency response guidebook is an informative and comprehensive guide designed for use at a dangerous goods incident occurring on a highway, aircraft, ship or railroad. It enables first responders to quickly identify the specific or generic hazards of the material involved in an incident. The guidebook is used by many first responders. It is something that is widely provided.

Could the minister clarify a number of oversight positions for each mode of transportation, and for the transport of dangerous goods? After she has done that, perhaps she could comment on the January 23 Transportation Safety Board-issued recommendations regarding emergency response assistance plans, ERAPs. Perhaps the minister could tell the House what actions our government took to respond to these recommendations.

• (2305)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, at the beginning of the evening, a mere three hours ago, I gave the correct number when it came to the number of civil aviation oversight inspectors. I gave the incorrect number in the last round of questioning. I just want to make sure that for the purposes of the record, I am clear that in civil aviation the oversight positions numbers are 1137 and not what I said, which was the total number, 1707.

I thank the hon. member for catching me on that one and ensuring that we have the record sorted out, and I am delighted that he talked about a topic that is very important to us.

With regard to what happened in Lac-Mégantic, the first meeting I had was in Lac-Mégantic with the mayor of Lac-Mégantic, and from there I met the local mayors ten days later. The one thing that came out of it was the importance of understanding that first responders needed to have certain information and, second, that they needed to ensure that they had a communication line open with the rail companies in their area.

That is what we have been trying to do through our protective directives, the first one having to do with the information and the second one, which we just did, having to do with emergency preparedness along Canada's railway lines.

As the member pointed out, an ERAP, or emergency response assistance plan, is a formal plan. It is what industry says it will do to support first responders, the ones first on the scene in the event of an accident involving dangerous goods. Sometimes it requires special expertise and sometimes it requires special response equipment. An ERAP helps municipalities and local emergency responders by providing them with around-the-clock technical expertise and specifically trained and equipped emergency response personnel at the scene of an accident.

The ERAP describes specialized response capabilities and equipment that would be used to support response to incidents involving higher-risk dangerous goods. It addresses emergency preparedness, personnel training, response exercises, and equipment maintenance.

As the hon. member also pointed out, CANUTEC supports first responders as well. Transport Canada's 24-hour emergency centre is staffed with scientists who provide real-time information and emergency responses by the first responders following an accident

or an incident, something which the municipalities told us they wanted to have.

Prior to my announcement on April 23, regulations required an ERAP for certain volatile refined fuels, such as gasoline or diesel, when there were a large number of cars in interconnected trains. The requirement did not apply to crude oil or if a smaller number of cars were transported.

ERAP requirements are now being expanded to include specific flammable liquids transported in large volumes by train. The protective directives that we put in place require shippers to develop these ERAPs for flammable liquids like crude oil, gasoline, diesel, aviation fuel, and ethanol. An ERAP is required even when it is just a single tank. I think that is an important specific issue with respect to how we are dealing with this matter.

Industry must submit the ERAP to Transport Canada for approval within 150 days, and we have set up a task force as well to facilitate even further more recommendations that may be made by the transportation of dangerous goods general policy advisory committee's emergency response working group.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Chair, we heard from a number of witnesses in committee from the Canadian firemen's association with respect to the flow of information with respect to what is being transported.

I wonder if the minister can tell Canadians of the discussions she has had with the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs with respect to rail safety and the role of first responders in the event of an accident.

• (2310)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs has been absolutely essential for our ability to work with the community on the issues of first responders. They have attended our meetings. They have met with me on a one-on-one basis. They have met with my officials. They have met with my staff as well. Their input is invaluable. I thank them for it, and I am very pleased that they themselves ended up commending our government for requiring emergency response assistance plans for these shipments and that they feel we are listening to the public safety concerns of emergency responders.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Chair, as a lot of people have done tonight, I would like to wish a happy birthday to the minister. After seeing her performance at the press gallery dinner, I will not sing her *Happy Birthday*, but I do wish her happy birthday for what is left of it.

Funding for the motor vehicle safety program has been cut by 34% since 2009, from \$34 million to less than \$21 million this year. How many staff are currently working on this program?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: With respect to the motor vehicle safety program, Mr. Chair, we have 80 full-time equivalents in these positions.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, that is down from 126 full-time positions in 2009. Which positions have been cut, and which programs have been affected?

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Hon. Lisa Raitt: With respect to the question, Mr. Chair, affected positions were mainly responsible for outreach, which is road-user education, communications, and design. They were not related to legislative or regulatory operations and were not in the defects investigations and recalls division, meaning that they were not part of the safety administration.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, in June, a fatal road accident happened in Quebec. That accident may have been caused by a defective GM part.

When did GM become aware of the problem?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, with respect to the accident that happened last year, that accident was not tied to potential recalls of GM vehicles until afterward. I was notified of the recall issue with respect to GM on February 28.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, when was Transport Canada notified of the problem?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, on February 10, 2014, GM Canada issued the recall affecting 153,000 vehicles, specifically with respect to a defect that could allow an ignition to unintentionally move from the “run” position to the “accessory” or “off” position.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, when was Transport Canada notified of the problem?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, Transport Canada was notified when GM Canada issued its recall on February 10, 2014.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, GM has been subjected to five different U.S. inquiries or investigations, and its CEO has testified at two U.S. government hearings. Why does the Government of Canada not want Canadians to get answers from GM?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: With respect to the ongoing investigations in the United States, Mr. Chair, the timing of when the parent company knew of this defect is actually under investigation by U.S. authorities. We know that GM Canada does not act independently of its parent company. Decision-making like this on recalls is centralized, as it is with other manufacturers.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, does the minister not want Canadians to get answers and ask questions of GM directly?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, we have the Motor Vehicle Safety Act, and in that act, there is an obligation on manufacturers to let us know when there is a defect and to recall, if that is the case. We expect that manufacturers will adhere to that act. We expect that they would do so, because there are fines and possible imprisonment should they not do so.

• (2315)

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, the problem is that the minister tells us that Transport Canada knew about it in February, but GM, according to reports in the media, knew about the problem back in 2001. Why did it take so long?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, this is something that is subject to great scrutiny and investigation in the United States. As I said,

decision-making happens in the United States, and Canada is not separate from that. It is something that is held in the United States with respect to those matters.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, why not allow us to ask questions at the transport committee here in Canada?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, as I indicated already, GM Canada issued recalls. We do not have information as to whether it knew of that issue or that defect prior to the recall being given to Transport Canada. Transport Canada, of course, has been involved with respect to prosecutions under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act in the past. The difficulty is that we are waiting to see what is happening in the United States with respect to their information. The investigations will continue there.

Further to that, it is fair to say, correcting something I said earlier, that Transport Canada was not aware of an ignition switch issue prior to receiving its first notice from GM Canada in February. Therefore, there was no connection made to that previous accident the hon. member referred to that happened, unfortunately, in June of last year.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, it is a shame that the minister does not want us to ask her and GM questions in committee.

Now I would like to talk about an issue that is very important to me: the Champlain Bridge. Transport Canada is responsible for building the new Champlain Bridge, yet the Minister of Infrastructure is the one in charge of the project.

What is the minister's role in this file?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, we have been very clear from the beginning on the matter with respect to this bridge. Although work is being carried out by Transport Canada, this is a bridge that is under the authority and under the carriage of the file of my colleague, the Minister of Infrastructure.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, the minister who is currently managing the file has managed to turn everyone against the government's position. It would be good if the Minister of Transport took over the file. Can she tell us what proportion of the construction costs will be paid for by the toll?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, what I can say is, I am very confident in my colleague, the Minister of Infrastructure's handling of the file. He was an excellent transport minister. He is an excellent infrastructure minister and intergovernmental affairs minister. He will manage this file to his greatest capabilities. I have great confidence in him.

With respect to the Champlain Bridge itself, as I indicated, he has carriage of that file. Although Transport Canada is involved with respect to supporting the minister on that file, it is not something within my portfolio.

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[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, I would like to point out that normally, the same amount of time is supposed to be allocated to the question and the answer. Some of the answers are longer than my questions.

Since this is tied to her department, can the minister tell us how many jobs the new bridge construction will create?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, again, I would defer to the Minister of Infrastructure on the particulars of this project.

What I can say is we have been very clear since the beginning on this matter. The new bridge will be built through a P3 partnership. There will be public transit and there will be tolls.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, there are Transport Canada officials working on the Transport Canada file. Is the minister telling us that no one at Transport Canada knows how many jobs will be created thanks to one of the largest construction sites in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, Transport Canada is supporting the Minister of Infrastructure on this file and any inquiries with respect to the numbers he is receiving can go through the Minister of Infrastructure to Transport Canada for that information.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, the problem is that the government does not even consider how many jobs will be created when it issues a call for tenders. That is not even a government requirement. It is disappointing that we are not getting a response.

I will now come back to the DOT-111 railway cars, which my colleague already spoke about. The minister listened to our recommendations about the need for a time frame. I commend her on that. However, with a time frame of three years, what will happen with the DOT-111 railway cars that are not necessarily in good shape? What will happen with the old DOT-111 cars that keep running? Why not have Transport Canada give exemptions so that companies can continue to use them, instead of continuing to allow old DOT-111 cars on the tracks?

• (2320)

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I think I am a little confused at this point. I do not think the hon. member is trying to say that I should not phase out these DOT-111 cars, so I will let him re-ask.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, the minister has put a timeline of three years. During that time we still have old DOT-111 going on our rails. What I am asking is, instead of allowing old DOT-111s to go through communities and urban areas, why not ask Transport Canada to give an exemption to the companies so they can make sure that when old DOT-111s are still being used, they are being used in a safe way?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, the approach that we are taking with respect to responding to the Transportation Safety Board is to deal with a means of containment, meaning the DOT-111 cars. We have done it in two ways. First, he should know that there are a variety of

different types of cars within this framework of DOT-111. Some of them, like the 5,000 that we want out of the country in 30 days, are the ones that are the most dangerous. There is a version of DOT-111 cars in various inclinations in between. That is acceptable.

We published that regulatory *Gazette* process in January of this year. That is standard. What we would like is to have cars at that standard or higher by May 1, 2017. That is what we will be doing over the next three years.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, the minister is not answering the question that I am putting forward.

It is the same thing with the Liberals. They are talking about self-regulation and allowing the companies to say that they are going to use the old DOT-111s. What we are saying is that Transport Canada's role is to keep Canadians safe. Why not give an exemption to the companies instead of just allowing everyone to still use the old DOT-111s?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, in the next three years DOT-111s will continue to be used. Remember, this is only for crude and ethanol transport, which is important to say. Around that, we have other rail safety measures to ensure that, in the entire approach with respect to rail safety, the operating measures are in place as well to enhance the safety, as are the means of containment as we move through the three years.

We also balance out the speed of the train, which is important, and all of the other things that we have done in the past nine months with respect to increasing safety in the operations of trains in the country.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell me how many dangerous goods inspectors there are?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, there are 70.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, I have another number.

There are then 70 inspectors for 40,000 sites in Canada. Did the budget cuts affect this number?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I can tell the member that in the transportation of dangerous goods there are 70 positions in general, and 35 of those are inspectors. They take care of the inspection facilities and the inspections of other places in which there are dangerous goods.

We also have a very robust and good set of acts and regulations under the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, which carry heavy fines and criminal liabilities if they are breached. We take that very seriously.

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Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, the minister is saying that there are fines given to companies when the law is breached. How many fines did Transport Canada issue last year?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, I will get back to the hon. member on that topic.

• (2325)

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell us if there were any fines, and if she does not have the number for last year, then for the past five years?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, we will come back on this question as well.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Chair, the media report that there were no fines, and we want to know why there were no fines given.

[*Translation*]

I have one last question if there is time.

With regard to Lac-Mégantic, my colleague asked questions about insurance. The insurance was not enough. The residents had to pay \$8 million to clean up the damage caused by the Lac-Mégantic tragedy.

When will the minister address the deficiencies in the liability regime, as requested by Mayor Collette Roy Laroche?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, the Prime Minister in the Speech from the Throne this year indicated that we would review the rail liability scheme. That is exactly what the department is doing. It has put on the website a discussion paper and consultations have occurred on the matter. It is analyzing the data and will be reporting back to me on the path forward.

We take the matter very seriously because fundamentally we do believe that the polluter should pay.

The Chair: That time is up. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport will have about four minutes before time expires.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Chair, first let me add for the public record, as the day is drawing to a close, my best wishes to the minister for a happy birthday.

Let me commend the minister as well, who is doing a fine job in the transport portfolio. She is demonstrating that she is one of the ablest transport ministers Canada has ever had.

I am thankful to our senior officials as well, who are dedicated public servants, and their team of literally thousands of dedicated, non-partisan public servants at Transport Canada who do diligent work day after day to ensure that Canadians remain safe and that public safety is taken seriously.

Obviously there are ministerial staff who work very closely with the minister day by day to ensure that priorities are achieved. They work not according to the clock, but beyond the clock, until tasks are finished. That is critical.

There are members of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities who are here today in support of the

minister. They do phenomenal work, particularly in a study right now on all modes of transport involved with safety management systems and the transportation of dangerous goods by rail, water, air, and truck. We are doing important work to support what the minister is doing. We are doing that with members opposite. It is all about important public safety.

I want to ask a couple of questions.

First, in response to the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, I think there is an important clarification the minister wants to get on the record with respect to Aéroports de Montréal.

Second, and also my favourite topic, is the economic importance of the Detroit River international crossing. What progress is happening on that, and why is this government and not the opposition importantly positioned to deliver on this key project for this nation, the number one infrastructure priority of this government?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Chair, to respond to the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, as I mentioned, Aéroports de Montréal is required to have noise management plans. They have a noise management committee. What I would like to draw to attention is that each time an apparent irregularity is noted, the airport informs Transport Canada, and the ministry then decides on an appropriate action. The list of offences and offenders is available on Transport Canada's website.

I am happy to talk about the new Detroit River international crossing because it is something that has a two-fold purpose.

First, it will help us so much in terms of trade and in terms of jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. It is one of those projects that comes along once in a generation, a project that we can be absolutely proud of. I am proud of all of the work that the parliamentary secretary has been doing on this, following it from its very beginning. He has been a very big cheerleader and has been involved every step of the way. I am grateful to have his expertise and his experience on this file as we move forward together to ensure that this bridge gets built.

It has to get built, because we need it for growing trade and to deal with traffic at the busiest U.S.-Canada commercial border crossing. Thousands of jobs will be created. Eight million American jobs and two million Canadian jobs depend on trade and investment between our two countries, so having this link will help ensure that we support those kinds of jobs between our two countries.

It is also going to be a much-needed crossing alternative because it is expected as well to create 10,000 to 15,000 construction jobs in Ontario and Michigan.

Our government will continue to move forward on this project. Budget 2014 is providing over \$630 million for construction of the new bridge. We are at the point in time where we will be naming the CEO, setting up the crown corporation, assembling the lands, and beginning construction and procurement of this bridge.

Business of Supply

It is something I am proud of. I am proud of the involvement of the parliamentary secretary as well. I am grateful for his question.

• (2330)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: It being 11:30 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:30 p.m.)

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