



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 12, 2014

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 12, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[English]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the annual reports on the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act from the Information Commissioner of Canada for the year 2013-14.

[Translation]

These documents are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

* * *

COMMISSIONER OF LOBBYING

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the annual reports on the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act from the Commissioner of Lobbying for the year 2013-14.

[English]

This document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Pursuant to section 11 of the Lobbying Act, I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Commissioner of Lobbying for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2014.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 447 petitions.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report

of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, entitled "Review of the Canadian Music Industry".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Finance

[English]

The report is entitled "Youth Employment in Canada: Challenges and Potential Solutions". Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

As it is the end of the session, I would like to thank very much all of our hard-working staff, our clerk, our analyst, and all the legislative staff for their excellent work on what will probably be our last report of this session.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after two years' hearing from many witnesses, and hard work on behalf of all the clerks, staff, and members of the defence committee, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on National Defence, entitled "Caring for Canada's Ill and Injured Military Personnel".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as vice-chair, I would like to state the dissenting opinion of the official opposition to this report. We heard witnesses for two full years on this critical issue of ill and injured military personnel, injuries both physical and psychological.

We do know, of course, that with regard to the physical injuries, Canada is doing a great job. We heard that evidence, and the report deals with that very well.

However, in terms of psychological injuries, it is a different story. Over time, even in the Afghanistan mission, despite early warnings, the military seemed to be constantly playing catch-up in terms of the treatment of soldiers suffering from psychological injuries.

The projections that were made by Statistics Canada in 2002, adopted by the military in 2005, still have not been met.

Routine Proceedings

Many soldiers came back from Afghanistan and other missions, including Bosnia, Rwanda, et cetera, with their bodies intact but with underlying psychological trauma, with long-term consequences not always recognized, not well understood, and they received inadequate treatment and support.

We are moving forward, but complacency is not an option. Our report outlines some very important measures that need to be taken immediately.

* * *

[Translation]

VIA RAIL CANADA ACT

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-614, An Act respecting VIA Rail Canada and making consequential amendments to another Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour of introducing a bill about VIA Rail. We know that VIA Rail is in crisis. Service is threatened in many regions of Canada. Vancouver Island has lost its service. There is no more service on the Gaspé coast. Service in the Maritimes has been cut by 50%, and there is a real concern that all service in eastern Quebec could be completely eliminated.

We know that even with the significant investments that have been made in the past 10 years, VIA Rail is still in a downward spiral. There are fewer passengers and fewer resources, and the equipment is in terrible shape. We need a legislative framework that will promote VIA Rail service in Canada. We want a legislative framework that is modelled after the American one, which saved another service that was threatened, namely Amtrak.

A similar framework here would put us on the right track. We could save VIA Rail. I am relying heavily on the bill that was introduced a few months ago by my former colleague, Olivia Chow, before she left the House.

I hope that members of the House will support this bill so that we can have appropriate VIA Rail service.

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

* * *

●(1010)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-615, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cruelty to animals—electric shock collars).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to introduce a private member's bill promoting animal welfare in Canada. This bill would ban the use of harmful electric shock collars on companion animals, better known as household pets. Using shock collars is widely recognized as causing needless pain and being cruel and inhumane, and use has been restricted in numerous other jurisdictions.

I am particularly honoured to be putting this bill forward, because it is a truly constituent-driven initiative. It is inspired by Gwendy and Alfie Williams, two committed advocates from my riding of

Burnaby—Douglas, who have been mobilizing concerned citizens to protect animals for more than seven years. Without a doubt, never before has my office received so many petitions and letters on a single specific issue. However, really what swung me to action is a local elementary school. Students from this school joined the chorus of voices seeking a ban on the use of these harmful shock collars.

I believe this is how our democracy should function. MPs should come here to Ottawa and put forward ideas on behalf of their community that elects them. When this happens, we are doing our duty to serve Canadians.

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-616, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (failure to comply with a condition).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it pleases me today to rise to introduce my private member's bill, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

The reality of our justice system is that a disproportionately small number of offenders is responsible for a disproportionately large number of offences. This act would create two important parole reforms that target these repeat and high-risk offenders. Its enactment would create a new offence for the breach of conditional release and require the reporting of those breaches to the appropriate authorities. It is critically important that an accurate record be maintained with respect to an offender's breach of conditions while on early release, so that future justice decisions may take this conduct into account.

These amendments are proposed in the belief that early release from a court sentence is a privilege to be earned and not a right to be demanded.

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

* * *

INTERPROVINCIAL WASTE MOVEMENT ACT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-617, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (interprovincial movement of waste).

She said: Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley started a project called "Create your Canada", whereby students could learn about the legislative process—learn about the role of media, for example — talk about some of the problems in their communities, and come up with legislative solutions.

I took on that project in Halifax, and the grade 12 French immersion class taught by Rob Williams at Citadel High School took on the challenge. The students came up with all kinds of great ideas, from the promotion of local foods to lowering the voting age to some really complicated changes to the tax code.

The class actually decided to pick a bill whose concept was developed by Ben Smithers and Finlay Miller, and it was about changes to the Environmental Protection Act to ban the inter-provincial transportation of waste. Their thoughts were that we are producing too much waste, and if authorities in the provinces actually had to deal with the waste their provinces produce, then they would come up with innovative solutions to combat how much waste we are producing.

I am proud to table this bill today. I am proud to represent these incredible students who know so much more about the legislative process now and who are so committed to the environment. I look forward to debate on this bill; it will be pretty exciting.

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

* * *

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, in accordance with section 81 of the Parliament of Canada Act, R.S.C., 1985, c. P-1, this House approve the reappointment of Mary Elizabeth Dawson as Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

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 Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1050)

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

(Division No. 204)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Anders
Andrews
Ashfield
Atamanenko
Bateman
Benoit
Bergen
Bezan
Blanchette-Lamothe
Bloch
Boughen
Brahmi
Breitkreuz

Adams
Albas
Alexander
Ambler
Anderson
Armstrong
Aspin
Aubin
Bélangier
Benskin
Bernier
Blanchette
Blaney
Boivin
Boutin-Sweet
Braid
Brisson

Brosseau
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt
Calkins
Carrie
Chicoine
Chisu
Choquette
Comartin
Crockatt
Cullen
Daniel
Day
Del Mastro
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra
Eyking
Fantino
Fletcher
Freeman
Gallant
Garrison
Giguère
Goguen
Goodale
Gosal
Grewal
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Jacob
Julian
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Larose
Laverdière
Leitch
Leslie
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mai
Mayes
McGuinty
Menegakis
Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Norlock
Obhrai
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Patry
Péclet
Poilievre
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Reid
Richards
Saganash
Scarpaleggia
Seeback
Shiple
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Smith
Sorenson
Stewart
Strahl
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren

Routine Proceedings

Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Calandra
Cannan
Casey
Chisholm
Chong
Clarke
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davidson
Dechert
Devolin
Dion
Donnelly
Dreesen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fortin
Galipeau
Garneau
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Goldring
Goodyear
Gourde
Groguhé
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
James
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komaricki
Lamoureux
Lauzon
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Lemieux
Leung
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
Maguire
Mathysen
McColeman
McLeod
Merrifield
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nunez-Melo
O'Connor
Opitz
Papillon
Payne
Pilon
Preston
Rajotte
Ravignat
Regan
Rempel
Rousseau
Saxton
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sitsabaesan
Sopuck
St-Denis
Storseth
Sullivan
Tilson
Toone
Trotter
Turnell
Valeriote
Van Loan

Routine Proceedings

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— 217	

NAYS

Members

May— 1

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to you and to the House. I did not vote on this motion because I was late from a medical appointment. If I had been voting, I would have voted in favour.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, is it possible, with the unanimous consent of the House, for the member's vote to be counted in favour, in view of the circumstances?

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans wish his vote to be counted?

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to allow his vote to be counted as a yea?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will try one more time. If the House gives its consent, I move:

That the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House yesterday be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

FIREARMS RECLASSIFICATION

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again today to present two more petitions from my constituents and constituents across Alberta who bring to the

attention of the House of Commons that law-abiding citizens should be free to use firearms for recreational use. The current ability of the RCMP bureaucrats to make decisions on the spot regarding the classification of guns impedes the rights of law-abiding Canadians. They ask that this legislation be fixed so that unelected bureaucrats no longer have control over weapons.

NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD DAY

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions signed by thousands of Canadians across the country including those in my riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody. The petitioners say Canadian consumers want to support sustainable seafood options and they call upon the Government of Canada to designate March 18 as national sustainable seafood day.

● (1055)

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from Canadians who want the government to take measures to stop the global practice of shark finning and to ensure the responsible conservation and management of sharks. They call on the government to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins in Canada.

EATING DISORDERS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition regarding eating disorders. Eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia are serious mental illnesses that can be fatal. More than 600,000 Canadians have been incapacitated by eating disorders. The sooner someone receives treatment he or she needs, the better the chance of a good recovery, but Canadians suffer long waiting lists for help and limited access to mental health services. The petitioners call upon the government to work with the provinces, territories, and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive pan-Canadian strategy for eating disorders, including better prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and support.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition that represents thousands of people from British Columbia. The petition highlights that 22-year-old Kassandra Kaulius was tragically killed by a drunk driver. Families for Justice is a group of people who have also lost loved ones to drunk drivers. They say that the current impaired driving laws are much too lenient. They call for new mandatory minimum sentencing for people who have been convicted of impaired driving causing death.

CONFLICT MINERALS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition regarding the war that has been raging in the Congo since 1998, where 5.4 million people have been killed and where rape is being used as a weapon of war. The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to pass the conflict minerals act, Bill C-486. The petitioners are from the Ottawa region, including Kanata. They want the government to pass Bill C-486 to stop the revenues that are going to these militias who are creating so much conflict in the region of the DRC.

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a number of petitions. The first group of petitions is on behalf of a large number of Quebec residents, who are calling for the creation of a legal mechanism to establish an ombudsman for the extractive sectors.

[Translation]

The ombudsman would have the power to receive and investigate complaints, make findings public, recommend remedial actions, and recommend that penalties be imposed.

[English]

CANADA POST

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to present a petition on behalf of many Nova Scotians who are concerned about recent cuts announced by Canada Post. They call upon the government to place a moratorium on these cuts and conduct meaningful consultations with the public to determine the best way to modernize operations with the least impact on customers and employees.

The Speaker: Order, please. I urge members to be as brief as possible so that we do not run out of time. I see many members rising to participate, so I will ask members to bear that in mind.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will try to be brief.

I have petitions on a number of different subjects, so I will just state what they are by topic. Some of these petitions were presented to me by my constituents and others by constituents of the Minister of State for Democratic Reform, who cannot introduce them, as he is a minister. Therefore, he has asked me to introduce those on his behalf.

The first petition is calling for fair representation in the House of Commons. The petitioners would favour a bill on a proportional system of representation being passed.

CANADA POST

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition relates to the reduction of Canada Post services. The petitioners are concerned and ask the government to reverse its position on this subject.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have several petitions opposing Bill C-18.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition opposing genetically modified alfalfa.

The Speaker: Order, please. I do think we need to move on. I did point out that there are many members rising and I would hate for

Routine Proceedings

someone to get missed, so I will go to the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

PENSIONS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I present a petition from Edmontonians asking the government to restore the old age security age of eligibility to 65 years.

• (1100)

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition from Albertans, asking the government to stop the cuts to the CBC, an important national institution.

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a third petition, calling upon the government to take greater care in the labelling of genetically modified foods so that Canadians can be informed on their food choices.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to present petitions that contain about 3,600 signatures collected by Kim Thomas, who is from the town of Cochrane in my riding, and her many friends and family, in conjunction with the group Families for Justice, after her son Brandon Thomas was tragically killed by an impaired driver in 2012.

In the interests of public safety, the petitioners call upon the government to implement tougher laws and new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

The first petition is from concerned citizens of Oshawa who are worried about the FarmTech Energy plan to build an ethanol-producing facility at the Oshawa harbourfront. The petitioners want the federal government to halt the construction of the plant, instruct that public hearings be held, and complete an environmental assessment on the site and surrounding areas.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with respect to Bill C-24, the amendment to the Citizenship Act. These petitioners are concerned that it treats Canadian permanent residents who came to Canada as temporary workers and international students who have spent a considerable amount of time here and wish to have that time counted toward their citizenship unfairly. They are of great economic benefit, and the petitioners want the government to amend the Citizenship Act to recognize the contribution that these citizens make.

Routine Proceedings

FIREARMS RECLASSIFICATION

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present on behalf of constituents. In the first, constituents have expressed concern about the classification of firearms changing without proper public consultation and notice. The petitioners call upon Parliament to watch over the reclassification in a transparent and fair manner that respects private property.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the second petition the petitioners note that an Environics poll showed that 92% of Canadians believe that sex-selective pregnancy termination should be illegal. The petitioners call upon members of Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls through sex-selection pregnancy termination.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions from constituents of mine who are asking the government to cancel the Canada Post cuts. They very much want a service that is public and accessible.

[*English*]

VIA RAIL

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, second, I have a series of petitions on VIA Rail. I have a stack of them from northern New Brunswick and from my riding in Gaspésie, where the service has either been cut back by half or entirely eliminated, in fact. We want our VIA Rail service back.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present three petitions. The first is from petitioners requesting that the Canadian Parliament and government publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China and pass a resolution to establish measures to prevent organ trafficking.

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from constituents who want the government to recognize volunteer service by Canadians in the regular and reserve military forces and the cadet corps with the issuance of a Governor General's volunteer service medal.

DEMENTIA

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition calls for a national dementia strategy. The petitioners are asking the Minister of Health and the House of Commons to support Bill C-356.

SCIENCE

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting a petition today signed by hundreds of scientists and professors from universities and labs across Canada. The petition concerns Bill C-558, which aims to establish a non-partisan parliamentary science officer. The petitioners note that since 2006, the Conservative government has undermined scientific integrity, recklessly ignored scientific evidence for political reasons, and muzzled public scientists in the civil service.

The signatories are calling for the creation of an independent science watchdog in Canada, and I would urge the government to support this petition.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from people mostly from the Vancouver area, who note that millions of girls have been lost through sex-selective abortion, creating a gender imbalance. Parliament needs to condemn this worst form of discrimination against females.

THE SENATE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of Canadians, particularly from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. The petitioners wish to call upon the Government of Canada to abolish the unelected, unaccountable Senate of Canada once and for all. The petitioners say that appointed senators, especially those who abuse their privileges, do not represent the interests or values of Canadians.

• (1105)

FALUN GONG

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first petition is identical to the one from the member for Kitchener Centre, which is with respect to the persecution of the Falun Gong and preventing organ harvesting.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, which is similar to the petition from the member for London—Fanshawe, is from people who want us to consider recognizing the cultural ties, et cetera, of foreign workers and international students with respect to recognizing more of their time here being put toward citizenship.

SAMBRO ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition regarding the oldest standing and operating lighthouse in the Americas, which is the Sambro Island Lighthouse in my riding. The petitioners are asking for a strategy for the preservation of the Sambro Island Lighthouse and a commitment to preserve the site. They have lots of ideas on how to do that.

The petitioners and I look forward to the minister's response.

Routine Proceedings

GREAT LAKES

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from several hundred people in my riding. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to intervene to ensure the promised protection of the Great Lakes and the Lake Superior watershed to sustain its vision, which I will not read, in the interest of time.

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today because thousands of people in Drummond are opposed to the Canada Post cuts. People in my riding are very angry about the cuts and are asking the Conservative government to reverse the decision that could result in the loss of 6,000 to 8,000 jobs at Canada Post.

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I present petitions from people across Canada who believe we need to have mandatory minimum sentences for the worst cases of sexual assault and rape. The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to institute mandatory minimum sentences and particularly that members in this House stand with the victims of sexual assault and rape and give sexual predators the punishment they deserve.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also present a petition today about the current impaired driving laws. The petitioners believe that these laws are too lenient and ask that new mandatory minimum sentences be implemented for those convicted of impaired driving causing death.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first one is signed by hundreds of my constituents and other Nova Scotians who are appalled by Bill C-23 and the affront to democracy.

CANADA POST

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the government to back off on the cuts to home delivery by Canada Post. Again, it is signed by hundreds of my constituents and other Nova Scotians.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions. The first is from residents of Edmonton, Victoria, and Squamish, B.C. They are calling on the government to refuse to ratify the Canada-China investment treaty and to renegotiate its terms.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Pender Island. It is a very urgent plea for action to deal with the raw sewage discharged by recreational boaters all along the coast of B.C., but particularly in the Gulf Islands.

FALUN GONG

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from dozens of Canadians calling on the Parliament of Canada to take action in regard to the systematic persecution of Falun Gong and organ harvesting from its members.

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have just returned from the riding represented by my colleague from Sherbrooke, where a group of citizens organized an evening forum to express support for the CBC. They have the same goal as the more than 2,000 people who signed the petition and the 30,000 people who signed the electronic petition in support of the CBC.

Basically, the petition calls for stable, multi-year funding and protection, because people really care about the CBC.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 484 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 484—**Hon. Ralph Goodale:**

With regard to applications to the New Building Canada Fund since April 1, 2014: (a) for what projects were applications received; and (b) for each application, (i) on what date (ii) from what organization, (iii) in what province, (iv) what is the type of the project, (v) what component and/or subcomponent of the fund was funding sought under, (vi) what is the total value of the project, (vii) what is the total value of the requested federal contribution, (viii) when is the targeted completion date, (ix) how much funding is available during that period under that component or subcomponent of the fund?

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, the new Building Canada fund, the NBCF, was officially launched on March 28, 2014. The NBCF consists of the national infrastructure component and the provincial-territorial infrastructure component, which have different application processes.

The \$4-billion national infrastructure component, the NIC, provides funding for projects of national significance that have broad public benefits and that contribute to long-term economic growth and prosperity. To apply for funding, proponents must submit a detailed business case to Infrastructure Canada that demonstrates how the project meets the program's objectives and that presents category-specific outcomes and criteria.

S. O. 52

The \$10 billion provincial-territorial infrastructure component, the PTIC, provides funding to support infrastructure projects of national, regional, and local significance that contribute to objectives related to economic growth, a clean environment, and stronger communities. To support a wide range of infrastructure needs, the PTIC is divided into two sub-components, national and regional projects and the small communities fund.

National and regional projects, or PTIC–NRP, provides \$9 billion for projects that are nationally and regionally significant and are predominantly medium- and large-scale in nature. Projects under the NRP component will be jointly identified between Canada and provincial or territorial partners.

The small communities fund, or PTIC–SCF, provides \$1 billion for projects in communities with fewer than 100,000 residents. This will ensure that small communities have access to significant funding to support economic prosperity. Provinces and territories will be responsible for identifying and proposing projects for consideration.

In processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the principles set out in the Access to Information Act. Information received in respect of provincial, territorial, or municipal projects that have not been funded cannot be provided, on the grounds that such information was obtained in confidence from the government of a province, territory, or municipality. Likewise, information received from the private sector, including non-governmental organizations, in respect of projects that have not been funded cannot be provided, since such information was obtained in confidence from a third party.

As a result, Infrastructure Canada is not in a position to release information received from potential proponents in respect of projects that are in the process of being considered and have not yet had funding committed.

Members may note that on May 26, 2014, following a successful review of the City of Edmonton's application, the Government of Canada, partnering with the Government of Alberta and the City of Edmonton, announced that it had set aside up to \$150 million for the Valley Line stage 1 light rail transit expansion project in Edmonton under the new Building Canada fund through the provincial-territorial infrastructure component. This marks the first funding announcement since the launch of the new Building Canada fund and brings the total federal contribution to the project to up to \$400 million.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 499 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 499—**Mr. Robert Chisholm:**

With regard to applications made under the Employment Insurance Program: (a) what was the volume of applications for Employment Insurance, Special Benefits, that have been received by Service Canada in 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014, broken down by (i) year, (ii) province/region; (b) how many of the cases in (a) waited longer than 28 days for a response, broken down by (i) year, (ii) province/region; (c) what was the volume of applications for Employment Insurance, Regular Benefits, that have been received by Service Canada in 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014, broken down by (i) year, (ii) province/region; and (d) how many of the cases in (b) have waited longer than 28 days for a response, broken down by (i) year, (ii) province/region?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

FOREIGN ACCOUNT TAX COMPLIANCE ACT

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night I gave you notice under Standing Order 52 (2) that I would be seeking leave today to propose an emergency debate on the implementation in Canada of FATCA, the U.S. foreign account tax compliance act. As you know, the Canada-U.S. enhanced tax information exchange agreement implementation act is contained in Bill C-31 and is currently before the House.

We read in *The Globe and Mail* this week that the United States Internal Revenue Service has announced that it is working on creating an amnesty program aimed specifically at U.S. residents who have resided abroad for many years. The new commissioner, John Koskinen, has stated: "We are well aware that there are many U.S. citizens who have resided abroad for many years, perhaps even the vast majority of their lives", and promised more details of the amnesty program "the very near future".

The IRS is now working on creating a path specifically for otherwise honest people who want to comply with their U.S. tax obligations without using the hammer of steep penalties designed primarily to punish U.S. residents trying to duck their taxes.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the latest omnibus budget implementation bill is presently at third reading stage and will soon be submitted to a final vote. There will be no opportunity to debate this issue as an opposition day motion later this month. Mr. Speaker, I am urging you to give this your urgent attention.

Speaker's Ruling

●(1110)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising this issue, but as the member himself pointed out, it has been part of a bill that has been debated before the House yesterday and for a few more minutes this morning. Therefore, I do not think it would reach the conditions set out in the standing orders for the Speaker to grant an emergency debate at this time, and I will decline it.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

TIME ALLOCATION FOR VANESSA'S LAW—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on May 30, 2014, by the House leader of the official opposition regarding the validity of a notice of time allocation with respect to Bill C-17, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the House leader of the official opposition for having raised the question, as well as the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the member for Oxford for their contributions.

[English]

The House leader of the official opposition argued that the consultation required pursuant to Standing Order 78(3) had never taken place and therefore the Chair should rescind the notice for time allocation for Bill C-17. Furthermore, it was his contention that there was no need for the government to resort to time allocation at all since the bill had been on the order paper for six months, yet had received virtually no debate to date.

[Translation]

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons confirmed that although the contents of confidential House leaders' meetings could not be revealed, agreements had been proposed to the House leader of the official opposition and his staff. Notice of time allocation was then given only once it was evident that no agreement could be reached.

[English]

Through this point of order, the Chair is being asked to stand in judgment of two things, the first being whether or not there were consultations such that the conditions of Standing Order 78(3) were satisfied. The second is whether the time that the House had debated Bill C-17 was sufficient enough to warrant the use of time allocation.

[Translation]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, on pages 669 to 670, states that:

The Speaker has stated that the wording of the rule does not define the nature of the consultations which are to be held by the Minister and representatives of the other parties, and has further ruled that the Chair has no authority to determine whether or not consultation took place nor what constitutes consultation among the representatives of the parties.

[English]

As recently as March 6, 2014, the Deputy Speaker addressed this very issue when, on page 3598 of *Debates*, he reminded the House that:

The nature of the consultation, the quality of the consultation, and the quantity of the consultation is not something that the Chair will involve himself in. That has been the tradition of this House for many years. What the Chair would have to do, in effect, is conduct an extensive investigative inquiry into the nature of the consultation. That is not our role, nor do the rules require it.

Therefore, it remains a steadfast practice that it is not the role of the Speaker to determine whether consultations have taken place or not.

With respect to the amount of debate a bill must receive before notice of a time allocation motion can be given, the Chair is being asked to render a decision on a matter over which there are no explicit procedural rules or practices, and thus, over which it has no authority. Rather, it is the House that retains that authority and therefore must continue to make that determination as to when and if a bill has received adequate consideration.

Accordingly, notice of time allocation for Bill C-17 was valid when it was given. I thank all members for their attention.

●(1115)

[Translation]

USE OF STANDING ORDER 56.1—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on May 16, 2014, by the House Leader of the Official Opposition regarding the use of Standing Order 56.1.

I would like to thank the House leader of the official opposition for having raised the question, as well as the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for his comments.

In raising his point of order, the House leader of the official opposition argued that the motion adopted by the House pursuant to Standing Order 56.1 on March 27, 2014, should have been deemed inadmissible as it directed the affairs of a standing committee.

In particular, he suggested that Standing Order 56.1 is not intended to be used as a way for the House to instruct committees to conduct certain studies or to hear particular witnesses, but, rather, as a way to expedite routine business or to grant powers to committees that they do not already possess. In his view, instructing a committee to undertake a study cannot be construed as simply establishing a committee power, nor can it be considered simply a routine matter.

Noting the potential difficulties of the current requirements of the Standing Order for smaller parties, as well as its use for matters with regard to which it was never intended, the House leader of the official opposition asked the Chair for clarification on the limits of Standing Order 56.1 in general and, in particular, whether the motion in question was admissible.

Speaker's Ruling

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons agreed that Standing Order 56.1 was not meant to be used to reach into the conduct of committees to direct them but, instead, was meant to provide committees, in a routine manner, with powers that they do not already have. In addition, he explained that, although committees generally have the power to send for persons, they are not empowered to compel the attendance of members of Parliament. Thus, he argued that the motion in question sought only to empower the committee, or at least remove any doubts about their power to study that matter and to compel the attendance of the Leader of the Opposition. Furthermore, since the motion was not related to the passage of a bill, he claimed that it did not violate the restriction against using Standing Order 56.1 on substantive matters, as enunciated by Speaker Milliken's ruling of September 18, 2001.

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons disagreed with the House leader of the official opposition asking the Speaker to provide direction for the future, viewing this as an inappropriate practice and role for the Speaker. He also questioned the timing of the point of order, stating that it should have been raised early enough to allow for the Speaker's decision to be of some consequence.

Before I continue, I would like to read, for the benefit of the House, the motion at issue in this case:

That the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be instructed to consider the matter of accusations of the Official Opposition's improper use of House of Commons resources for partisan purposes; and

that the Leader of the Opposition be ordered to appear as a witness at a televised meeting of the Committee to be held no later than May 16, 2014.

[English]

Since its adoption by the House in April, 1991, Standing Order 56.1 has been used as a legitimate procedure to allow the House to deal with what the Standing Orders call "routine motions".

According to Standing Order 56.1(b), a routine motion:

—shall be understood to mean any motion, made upon Routine Proceedings, which may be required for the observance of the proprieties of the House, the maintenance of its authority, the management of its business, the arrangement of its proceedings, the establishing of the powers of its committees, the correctness of its records or the fixing of its sitting days or the times of its meeting or adjournment.

At issue then is whether the motion in question was an admissible motion, pursuant to Standing Order 56.1. While the wording of the Standing Order has not changed over time, at times its interpretation and use have. Consequently, its attempted use for various ends has, in turn, resulted in some procedural challenges. As a result, a body of practice and rulings has emerged, leading to a better understanding of the appropriate use of this Standing Order. As an example, it is now accepted that Standing Order 56.1 can be used to authorize committee travel.

At the same time, however, the understanding of what constitutes a routine motion has been allowed to expand over the years, a development that has caused concern to successive Speakers. Speaker Milliken characterized it as a "disturbing trend" as early as 2001.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice makes reference to this trend when, on page 671, it provides a list of examples of motions which had been allowed to proceed, but states that, "[Not]

all of these uses were consistent with the wording or the spirit of the rule...".

The motion in question in this case deals specifically with committees and, in that respect, while the Standing Order does allow motions for the "establishment of the powers of its committees", the question before me is whether the motion adopted falls squarely within those parameters or whether it strayed beyond them to direct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

• (1120)

Deputy Speaker Blaikie stated on June 5, 2007, at page 10124 of *Debates*:

A key element...is the fundamental precept that standing committees are masters of their own procedure. Indeed, so entrenched is that precept that only in a select few Standing Orders does the House make provision for intervening directly into the conduct of standing committee affairs.

A careful reading of the motion is telling: the committee was "instructed" to consider a matter and the leader of the official opposition was "ordered" to appear. In fact, it leads the Chair to the conclusion that the motion was an attempt to direct the internal affairs of the committee, thus stepping beyond what the House has come to accept as being within the confines of Standing Order 56.1. The government House leader argued that the motion granted the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs a power it did not have, namely the power to order a member to appear before the committee, but the motion went beyond simply granting the committee that power; it made the order for the committee. In the Chair's view this would have been more appropriately done by way of a substantive motion.

The House does have the power to give instructions to committees but it is how this is achieved that is important. The Chair does not believe the House ever intended that this be done by way of Standing Order 56.1. This was noted by Speaker Milliken, who stated, on September 18, 2001, at page 5258 of *Debates*:

The standing order has never been used as a substitute for decisions which the House ought itself to make on substantive matters.

The government House leader may have been correct in noting that substantive motions were used in the passage of legislation but one cannot draw the conclusion from that, that, therefore, motions not related to legislation are routine. There are in fact other types of substantive motions that are not bound to legislation.

At page 530 of O'Brien and Bosc, it states:

Substantive motions are independent proposals which are complete in themselves, and are neither incidental to nor dependent upon any proceeding already before the House. As self-contained items of business for consideration and decision, each is used to elicit an opinion or action of the House. They are amendable and must be phrased in such a way as to enable the House to express agreement or disagreement with what is proposed. Such motions normally require written notice before they can be moved in the House. They include, for example, private Members' motions, opposition motions on supply days and government motions.

Government Orders

The government House leader also attempted to draw a comparison with the November 8, 2012, precedent when the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights was “mandated...under Standing Order 56.1, to conduct the study required by section 533.1 of the Criminal Code”. However, it was not so much that the committee was instructed to conduct a study but, rather, that due to a mandatory statutory review of an act, the committee needed an order of reference from the House to proceed. As the opposition House leader suggested, it was a routine motion.

Thus, for the reasons stated, I would have been inclined to rule the motion out of order had this matter been raised within a reasonable delay. To be clear, the Chair did not readily deem the motion to be procedurally admissible, as the opposition House leader suggested. Instead, in the absence of any objection at the time that the motion was moved, the matter went forward and the motion was adopted.

The operation of Standing Order 56.1 has long been difficult for successive Speakers. This is in part because of the legitimate expectation that a motion moved pursuant to that Standing Order will be put to the House for decision without undue delay. This obligation is further complicated in instances where the Chair has had no advance notice that such motion is to be moved, as was the case in this particular instance, so I am sure all members will understand the quandary in which the Chair is left.

As the history of the use of motions under Standing Order 56.1 demonstrates, past speakers have all struggled with this dilemma and have almost invariably allowed even motions about which they had reservations to go forward, having had no time to properly assess their content and formulation. This is done in the expectation that alert members of the opposition will, if they deem it appropriate, rise to object. In this case, no one raised objections, the motion was put to the House and it was adopted.

The fact that the House leader of the official opposition waited so long to raise this point of order resulted in the terms of the motion having already been carried out. This is reminiscent of the situation faced by Speaker Milliken in 2001 when the government resorted to Standing Order 56.1 in a bid to dispose of numerous items of business—in this case some bills and certain supply proceedings—over the course of two sitting days. In that case, Speaker Milliken explained that he allowed the motion to proceed “because there were no objections raised at the time it was moved”. As he stated on September 18, 2001, at page 5258 of *Debates*:

However, to speak frankly, had the objection been raised in good time, I would have been inclined to rule the motion out of order. This situation serves again to remind members of the importance of raising matters of a procedural nature in a timely fashion.

The continuing trend away from the original intent of the Standing Order toward the moving of motions that are less readily identifiable or defined as routine is a concern that I share with my predecessors and one which continues to underscore the need for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to review and define the spirit and limitations of Standing Order 56.1. There is no doubt that this would be helpful to the Chair.

●(1125)

[*Translation*]

Finally, the House leader of the official opposition raised the issue of the fairness for smaller parties of a Standing Order that requires a minimum of 25 members to stand in order for it to be withdrawn. It is not for the Speaker to judge whether it is appropriate or not. As is the case with other rules adopted by the House, such as the threshold of five members to request a recorded vote, the Speaker’s role is to enforce it, not question it. As Speaker, I can only suggest that the member raise the matter with the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which is designated to review the rules of the House.

[*English*]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed from June 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for York Centre has eight minutes left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying last night, while the opposition parties may claim to be standing up for consumers, it is our government that has consistently acted on behalf of consumers since we first assumed office in 2006. For example, we moved to ensure fairness at the pump, implement anti-spam legislation, and require stronger drug-labelling regulations.

I would like to focus my remarks today on what we have done to increase competition in the telecommunications market, improve access to broadband, and ensure consumer protection for the people of Canada, all while creating new job opportunities in the wireless sector. I am confident that upon hearing my comments, all members of the House will agree that provisions such as this make this budget one of the strongest pieces of legislation in our government's tenure.

Through the 2014 economic action plan and other measures, the Government of Canada has put consumer protection at the forefront of our legislative agenda. Every Canadian family could tell us that cellphone, television, and Internet bills add up quickly and that every dollar counts when it comes to the household budget. We understand that Canadian families are tired of seeing inflated wireless bills, and that is why our government has taken action on this issue in economic action plan 2014.

Government Orders

We have a proven track record of delivering results for Canadians. In fact, since 2008 wireless rates have fallen by nearly 20%, and jobs within the wireless industry have increased by 25%. Prior to 2008, Canada's largest wireless companies held 99% of the market share. We have brought that number down by 10%. For Canadians living in rural areas, our government is investing \$305 million to extend and enhance broadband service to an additional 208,000 households. Furthermore, in January 2014 Canada held the 700 megahertz spectrum auction, which resulted in unprecedented success.

The 700 megahertz spectrum is the highest-quality wireless frequency option in Canada. It allows wireless signals to travel longer distances and penetrate thicker walls, and it requires fewer cellphone towers. The auction generated \$5.27 billion in revenue and paved the way for Canadians to benefit from a fourth wireless competitor in every region of the country. Key smaller players such as SaskTel, MTS, Videotron, and Eastlink secured their opportunity to maintain and expand their regional footprints. This means that Canadians will now have access to more choice, lower prices, and better service in our wireless industry.

The telecommunications provisions in economic action plan 2014 are consistent with our government's commitment to protecting Canadian consumers and increasing competition in the wireless market. Our government's wireless policies are aimed at lowering prices through competition, and the provisions in this budget are the next step in a long line of concrete actions our government has taken to put consumers first. Policies such as these are not created overnight; they are a result of careful consultation and deliberation with the industry, consumer groups, and Canadians at large.

Our government believes that nobody is better suited to tell hard-working Canadians how to spend their money than Canadians themselves. Our government is committed to empowering individual Canadians, which is why we have proposed amendments to the Telecommunications Act and the Radiocommunication Act to provide the CRTC and Industry Canada with the authority to penalize companies who violate the rules of the Wireless Code. This increased oversight would ensure that companies employ fair business practices.

The 2013 Speech from the Throne reminded us that healthy market competition is essential to keep prices low and keep businesses from becoming complacent. In economic action plan 2014, our government has proposed amendments to the Telecommunications Act that would cap wholesale domestic wireless roaming charges to keep wireless bills low for Canadians and to prevent wireless providers from charging other companies more than they charge their own customers. This would lead to a greater number of new entrants into the telecom industry, which would in turn create more jobs and stimulate market competition and growth in the wireless sector.

As Canadians are thoroughly aware, a lower price means greater competition, and greater competition means further lowering of prices. This change to the Telecommunications Act would be good for business, good for consumers, and good for Canada.

● (1130)

I hope my comments today will shed some light on this key feature of the 2014 economic action plan. I am sure every member in

this House will agree that our government's economic action plan 2014 is one of the finest budgets ever to be introduced into this place.

Despite ongoing economic challenges, Canadians know that they can count on this government to protect their interests. By maintaining fiscally responsible policies to continue on our path to a balanced budget, as well as increasing investment in Canadian families, seniors, and the environment, our government is delivering on our promise to keep more money in the pockets of Canadians and put Canada on a sure economic footing, leading to jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very astute remarks about this budget and also for his hard work around the Hill. I have observed him at committees and I have a high respect for his talents.

At the public accounts committee, where I currently serve, we recently learned that the national debt of Canada has been flatlined as a percentage to GDP, even during the worst economic recession in 60 or 80 years. Also, taxes have remained at an historic low.

At the same time, we are returning to balanced budgets. I know we have heard the leader of the third party say that budgets balance themselves. I wonder if my hon. colleague could comment on how it is that the government has been able to balance the budget at the same time as flatlining debt as a percentage of GDP and keeping taxes down.

● (1135)

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, I also admire my hon. colleague's work in this place and on committee.

I would like to say that when our government took power in 2006, the first thing we did under the leadership of the late minister of finance, Jim Flaherty, was pay down \$35 billion in debt.

This gave us the flexibility, when the recession hit in 2008-09, to be able to respond quickly. We did respond quickly with an economic action plan. We had a plan to stimulate the economy for that period of time to create jobs, growth, and prosperity.

What we did after the recession was over in mid-2009 was create 1.1 million net new jobs. These are people who have jobs and who pay taxes. We have lowered the corporate tax rate down to 15%. This has created an environment whereby companies from around the world now want to invest in Canada, in a very low-tax environment that is conducive to business and business-friendly.

Bloomberg has said that we are the second-best country in the world to be doing business in right now. All the major economic institutions around the world have said Canada has the soundest economy. The OECD and the IMF have said that we have the strongest fundamentals in place for the next 50 years to be leading the world in terms of economic performance.

The member could not have been more right. Our debt-to-GDP ratio is now 32% and going down to 25%, the lowest in the G7, and it is because we have a plan of low taxes and job creation. That is going to lead to long-term prosperity in this country of ours.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: That ends the time we have for debate on this bill.

Pursuant to an order made on June 5, the question is on the amendment.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[Translation]

Pursuant to order made Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the recorded division stands deferred until later this day, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

[English]

PROTECTION OF COMMUNITIES AND EXPLOITED PERSONS ACT

BILL C-36—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Criminal Code in response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Attorney General of Canada v. Bedford and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and

That, at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration at second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required, for the purpose of this Order and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

• (1140)

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what a surprise. This is, what, the 72nd time? It is tempting to repeat the arguments we have been making since the first time the government moved a time allocation motion. This time, the motion is on Bill C-36, which was meant to be a response to the Supreme Court's ruling on certain sections of the Criminal Code.

However, I do not get the impression that this motion is meant to silence the opposition. It seems as though it is meant to hide the debate from the Conservatives' own base. That is what I would like to ask the minister.

Yesterday I read a rather interesting report after the Conservative caucus meeting. It appeared to be saying that the government's strategy was not clear. The Conservatives themselves are divided. Some support decriminalization, some support outright prohibition, and some are not happy with the government's decision because what it is doing is not clear. The government seems to want to hide things and speed up the debate, keep it under the radar and get the committee work done in the summer, when everyone is gone.

This is my question for the minister. Was this time allocation motion moved not to prevent the opposition from speaking, but to prevent his own colleagues from speaking to this bill?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting idea for a sitcom, sort of like *Fantasy Island*. I was actually at that caucus meeting and I can assure members that the government's intention is to bring forward a bill that is principled, thoughtful, and intended to respond to a situation that was created by the Supreme Court of Canada when it struck down certain provisions of the Criminal Code in Bedford.

To enlighten my friend and anyone who may want to know what the bill is about, it proposes criminalizing those who are fueling the demand for a dangerous activity, mainly prostitution or the purchase of sexual services. It also continues to criminalize those who have received and would receive financial benefits from the prostitution of others and who procure others for the purposes of prostitution.

Further, it would criminalize those who advertise the sale of sexual services of others in print or online. It is all about protecting the victims of prostitution, and this is where quite a significant shift would occur in Canadian law, where we would treat the prostitutes themselves as victims, which predominantly they are; so it is about the protecting of prostitutes from criminal liability or for any part they may be playing in the purchasing, material benefit of procuring or advertising of offences, and ensuring at the same time that victims of prostitution are further protected so that persons who legitimately receive material benefit from prostitution of others would not be criminalized. This includes their spouses, roommates, children, or those who offer goods and services that the general public could also receive, such as accountants or taxi drivers.

The bill is quite clear. We have also added additional resources to help prostitutes exit the profession.

• (1145)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the government House leader, and it is 100% in regard to the use of time allocation.

It is important to recognize that the government, since it has acquired a majority, has used time allocation as a normal process. We need to recognize that the majority government has limited members of Parliament. By doing that, Conservatives are being disrespectful to all Canadians by not allowing for a natural flow of debate on legislation. Whether it is this or other pieces of legislation that come before the House, the government continues to use time allocation to prevent members of Parliament from representing their constituents on important issues.

Government Orders

One of the issues for me personally was in regard to the Wheat Board. There are so many bills, such as budget bills, for which time allocation is used. Why does the government choose to use time allocation time and time again, and why does it only use this since it acquired a majority government? It is the majority government that has been driving time allocation by the government.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, as a member of the majority government, I am going to suggest to my hon. friend that the use of time allocation is not some sort of new and innovative approach that has been taken by this government. I have been around here for some time, 17 years, much like the Chair, and I have seen this is very often used to keep the House moving and to keep legislation moving through the normal process.

In the case of the bill before the House, Bill C-36, the subject of this debate, the Supreme Court of Canada has specified a one-year period in which this legislation must respond to the gap in the Criminal Code that was created by the Bedford decision.

Therefore, there are expedited reasons to move this legislation forward, to get it through the second reading stage of the process and into committee so that we may have the ability, the somewhat unusual ability, for the justice committee to examine this legislation in greater detail and to hear from witnesses. We are looking at doing a similar process, a simultaneous process with the Senate, so that we can meet the deadline.

When we return in the fall, that good work will be done by members of the justice committee, members of the House from all sides, to provide rigorous examination of the legislation, to provide feedback, to improve upon the bill, to bring it back to Parliament for debate in the fall, and to see that it then finishes the regular process of proceeding through this chamber and through the Senate and passes into law well in advance of that December deadline set by the Supreme Court of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just a few moments ago, I heard the minister say that the use of time allocation in debates is not something new, that it is a parliamentary tradition and part of the process. However, what is new is that it has been used 72 times in a very short period of time. This even breaks the Liberals' record. It seems to me that the government wants to be in the *Guinness World Records*. However, this is a record to be ashamed of, not proud of.

Let me read the title of the bill we are dealing with here. It is Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Criminal Code in response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Attorney General of Canada v. Bedford and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. I think the title alone shows the legal and technical complexity of the issue. This legislation can have life-or-death consequences for some people. Why are we being muzzled again when we are debating this bill? Why does the government not want to give us the time to do a good job? When will the government stop muzzling Parliament itself?

• (1150)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question and some of the commentary with respect to the importance of the bill

and the fact that it does have within its title the descriptive word “protecting”. In fact, that is very much what the subject of the bill is about. It is about protecting vulnerable Canadians, communities that sometimes are at risk, and in particular, a specific group of Canadians to whom we do have a fiduciary duty to protect, and that is mainly our children.

I would suggest that throughout the bill we find ample evidence of the intent and the purpose of the bill to protect that group of individuals, to protect those who, in the vast majority of cases, find themselves involved with prostitution because of coercion, because of violence, because of experience early in life, in many cases when they were children.

The empirical evidence and anecdotal evidence we have looked at indicates quite clearly that the vast majority of prostitutes today, men and women, were exploited, were victimized, often through violence and addiction, and brought into the life of prostitution, arguably through no fault of their own, at a vulnerable early age, at an early stage in their lives when those who were victimizing them should have been counted on to protect them.

Many of them were victimized by people in positions of trust—coaches, religious leaders—those who truly should have been there to protect them. Having prosecuted some of those cases, we find it is tragic in every sense of the word. However, with respect to the necessity to bring the legislation forward, I would suggest that we have a very set period of time.

There will be, I am told, some five hours to debate this legislation at this stage, which is only the second reading stage. It then would go to a committee where there will be opportunity not only to hear from members of Parliament and senators, if that process is duplicated over the summer, but perhaps most important, to hear from more Canadians in addition to the 31,000 who participated in the online consultation and the face-to-face round table consultations I took part in.

This is a broad, inclusive dialogue on a very important issue, one that we have to get right, one that is also informed by the Supreme Court's decision itself. It is certainly something that has to occur in an expedited fashion because of those timelines in place from the Supreme Court.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the matter immediately before the House is the use of time allocation, which I point out is routinely used by Liberal majority governments in this country, but also, as I understand it, is used writ large in the mother Parliament back in the U.K.

As the minister has rightly pointed out earlier, this is an efficiency tool in terms of ensuring that the House, in a timely fashion, not only considers issues but makes decisions on them, and it also ensures that these matters get to committee in a timely fashion, so that the detailed study can occur. Not only is debate in the House important, but the discussion and input of Canadians in the broader civil society is important as we deal with an issue that has a lot of diverse opinions among the Canadian public.

Government Orders

I wonder if the minister could comment on the participation of Canadians in terms of consultation before the drafting of this particular bill. I wonder if he could comment further on what he was hearing in terms of specifics from Canadians and stakeholders and how that was incorporated into this particular bill, Bill C-36, that is before the House.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I heard extensively from individuals within my own community. I also heard from individuals during the cross-country consultation regarding the victims bill of rights, which I did in advance of the Bedford decision.

The most instructive part of those consultations was the view that those involved in prostitution are victims, that they have, as I said previously, in large part been brought into the life of prostitution through a number of complex social factors, whether they be homelessness, poverty, addiction, violence, or mental health issues. They are arguably some of the most vulnerable people in the country.

We are attempting to do this not only through legislative measures but through programming in partnership with provinces and territories and compassionate groups that exist within all of our communities, those who run homeless shelters, those who work specifically with anti-violence initiatives, those who spend time speaking with school children.

One of the target areas of education I would suggest is teenage boys. That is the demographic that we really need to speak to when we are talking about how we can end violence in its many forms, including domestic violence, which is so associated with this issue.

The bill, as complex as it may appear, is a well-informed bill that attempts to go to some of the root causation, that attempts to put the emphasis, the criminal liability, on the perpetrators, the johns, the pimps, and those who drive the demand for the purchasing and the commoditization of sexual services. The bill attempts to answer some of those very complex issues that have been around almost since time immemorial.

We need to get on with the business of the nation. This is an issue that affects many communities. This bill is a comprehensive, compassionate Canadian response. It needs to proceed because of the timelines and the pressure we are under, placed on us by the Supreme Court. The House has already done much of the good work in preparation for the bill. We have known of the subject matter for over six months. We want to get on with that. That is in part why we brought forward this time allocation motion, to see that the good work continues.

• (1155)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to hear the minister use the words “root causation”. I have heard him use those words in a different context when talking about others who talked about root causes in the past.

This is over 70 times that the government has used time allocation. Seeing as it is speeding up the process, I am wondering if the government is gathering together the necessary information in preparation for the committee to have a proper discussion on this issue based on all the facts before it.

People are worried that this particular piece of legislation would not meet the Supreme Court requirements, and it is debatable whether it would or not.

Is the government preparing to provide the committee with the legal advice that the government obtained when it was in the drafting stages of this particular legislation—and who provided that legal advice?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, we will always support the good work of committees. We will provide the committee with the relevant information it needs. The Department of Justice will be releasing further polling data. I have indicated quite clearly that is the case.

It is interesting to hear any sort of criticism of the use of closure coming from a member of the Liberal Party, the proverbial “wind sock” party of Canada, that simply turns and twists and adopts any particular position that would put it in a favourable light. The Liberal record of managing the finances of the country has been laid bare for all to see, going back to the sponsorship scandal, of which the member knows far more than I, as a member of the previous government.

We will continue to bring forward thoughtful legislation that responds to the need, and in this particular case, the task that was left to us by the Supreme Court when it struck down three provisions of the Criminal Code. This legislation would more than answer that particular task because it does have accompanying resources to help prostitutes find an off ramp into a better, healthier life that will help them deal with the causation that has led them to enter prostitution.

We are anxious to hear the position of members' opposite, their thoughtful suggestions as to how the bill could be improved. What we do get is just simply criticism and process. They want this sent back to the Supreme Court to let it do the good work.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government should perhaps do what any law-abiding Canadian citizen would do. When we must comply with a court ruling, we only have to do what we have been ordered to do. Every time the government is faced with this situation, that is, every time it introduces a bill, it twists itself into a pretzel to push its original idea through and try a second time to get around the court's orders. People are beginning to understand this strategy.

If it is truly urgent, I wonder why the bill is being introduced at the last minute, when we are about to adjourn for the summer. It may be because the government wants the debate to be held in the media only, in an emotional and somewhat irrational manner, so that it becomes impossible to have a debate, as is the case with the gun registry and abortion. There are many subjects that have become impossible to debate in our society.

The government is in large part responsible because it has allowed the debate to deteriorate and aired it in the media, instead of calmly discussing the issue in the House. It is becoming a sort of hysterical delusion that will last all summer. The government will certainly have time to think about it and perhaps will shred the bill during the summer. I hope it will be wise enough to do so.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I do not even know where to begin with that convoluted rambling and disjointed remark, other than to say that we are responding in a very comprehensive way. I would suggest that it is a compassionate way, with a particularly Canadian response to this age old issue of prostitution. Now the dilemma faced by having three major sections of the Criminal Code struck down in Bedford creates further vulnerability for prostitutes and communities.

Rather than the suggestion from the hon. member that this was somehow created by the government, this is directly responding to the Supreme Court's decision in Bedford. It is responding in a way that we believe would provide greater opportunities for prostitutes to leave that life. It is a life of inherently dangerous practice. They would be able to choose a better path for themselves and, potentially, their children. There is programming and specific resources to partner with the provinces and territories to help emphasize that there are, in fact, other opportunities.

We would be putting criminal liability squarely on the johns, the pimps, and those who benefit directly from those vulnerable individuals, who are predominantly victims and who, given the opportunity and the choice, would leave prostitution.

This is not to suggest that this would make prostitution disappear from the landscape of Canada or anywhere. It is what we believe to be a comprehensive response to a very difficult and complex social issue. It responds thoughtfully after great consultation with Canadians already, and will continue to do so following opportunity here in the House and later in committee. It will come back to the House in the fall.

It is a bit perplexing to hear from members opposite that they want more debate, but at the same time, they suggest that we are rushing it through. It is a bit like saying, "wash me, but do not make me wet".

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his work on this important file. As he highlighted, the Bedford decision required Parliament to deal with this issue.

I would like to ask him what level of consultation there has been over the last number of months in preparing for today and for Parliament to now deal with it. I wonder if he could elaborate on the collaboration.

I wonder if he could also elaborate on why he thinks the opposition wants to delay this. We know that this is the theme song of the Liberals. Their motto is, "why did we not get it done?" Maybe he could elaborate on why the NDP would be so opposed to dealing with this important social issue. This responsibility has been passed on to Parliament by the Supreme Court, so why would the NDP want to dither and delay the passage of this bill?

• (1205)

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Langley, not only for his interest, but for his good work in supporting those who certainly are vulnerable in his community. I know he has a long-standing interest in the issue of human trafficking and helping vulnerable constituents and Canadians.

With respect to how this matter proceeds and the consultation that we have undertaken, some 31,000 Canadians and organizations took part in the online consultation, which was one of the largest consultations ever undertaken by the Department of Justice. We also had round tables and extensive discussions in communities across the country during the victims bill of rights. Prostitution issues were very often intertwined in those discussions around victimization. I am quite confident that this bill was undertaken with a lot of goodwill and effort to include the perspectives, interests, and input from many Canadians from across a wide spectrum of views on the subject matter.

As to why any member of Parliament would want to delay on this issue is really beyond me. I believe, quite frankly, that it is in the non-partisan interest of Canadians. We should move forward with a thoughtful response, a legislative and resourced response, to this issue in advance of December, which is the timeframe the Supreme Court has given us to respond.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe what I have been hearing for the past few minutes. What we have here is an absolutely unbelievable democratic deficit.

Notwithstanding the fact that we are talking about the 72nd time allocation motion, the members on the government benches seem to think that discussing and debating something is a stalling tactic.

I have always understood—and that will be my question to my colleague, the Minister of Justice—that the process of passing a bill begins with its introduction at first reading. Let us not forget that there are 308 MPs in the House. Over the course of five hours of debate, roughly 10 people can rise in the House to speak. Most of them will be Conservative members, some will be NDP and a few will be from the Liberals, the third party in the House. Members of the different parties have a chance to speak.

Once that study is complete, we more or less form an opinion. Personally, I think it is extremely important to listen to the opinions of my colleagues of all political stripes. For example, my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul, who has devoted her life to this subject, might say something in her speech that will affect us in a certain way if we keep an open mind, if we do not remain closed to the opinions of others all the time.

That is why I think debate at second reading is so important. It gives people from across Canada the opportunity to express themselves about the topic at hand. Then, study in committee calls on experts and people in the field to add to the debate. Once clause-by-clause review is done, the bill is sent back to the House.

Here it is all backward. The government stifles debate at second reading and often at third reading as well. In committee, the government does not really care about the amendments or opinions of others.

Does the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada not think that there is a huge democratic deficit here? Speaking to a subject that is just as important to us as it is to the government members is not a stalling tactic, it is a question of democracy.

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for her commentary. I do not agree with it. I do not believe that there is any way a democratic deficit in bringing legislation before the House to be debated.

One of the principles of democracy, and I think my friend would agree, is that democracy requires people to show up. That seems to have been a problem in some cases, where legislation was brought forward and there were not enough members here to discuss it.

It is a bit of sucking and blowing to say that they want more debate but they do not have enough members here to actually take part in that debate. That is one end of the extreme.

The other is we have seen the use of debate to delay legislation. I know when I was minister of defence we had a very simple, straightforward bill, and the NDP debated it around the clock through three Parliaments. It finally passed the House, to the great benefit of the members of the armed forces.

My suggestion to the member is there is necessity and urgency that this bill proceed and that it get to committee. There will be five hours of debate here, as the member knows. Once it is in the committee stage, there will be more opportunities for all members of Parliament from all sides of the House to give direct input while hearing from various witnesses with expertise in the area.

Then the bill comes back again. The bill will come back before the House again. There is an opportunity at that time to voice views.

Rather than complain about the process, what I think would be helpful for Canadians would be for the NDP and the Liberals to actually take a position, to actually state, emphatically, how they feel about this legislation, what they would do to improve it, and how they might do things differently.

That would be a useful participatory process, rather than just chirping from the cheap seats about sending it to the Supreme Court for another reference or trying to divide bills. Let us talk about what their actual substantive, constructive criticisms and participation in the debate might actually be.

• (1210)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The half hour has expired.

Is the House ready for the question?

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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Call in the members.

• (1250)

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

(Division No. 205)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
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)	Kenny (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lauzon
Lebel	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier

Government Orders

Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	
Williams	Wilks
Woodworth	Wong
Young (Oakville)	Yelich
Zimmer— 147	Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Andrews	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélanger	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Caron	Casey
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeman
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Grogouhé
Harris (St. John's East)	Jacob
Julian	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Laverdière	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Mathysen
May	McGuinty
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Pilon
Quach	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Rousseau	Saganash
Scarpaleggia	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Toone
Turmel	Valeriote— 90

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I declare the motion carried.

SECOND READING

The House resumed from June 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Criminal Code in response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Attorney General of Canada v. Bedford and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): When this matter was last before the House, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster had completed his remarks, but had not yet had questions and comments.

Seeing none, resuming debate, the hon. member for Charlottetown.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada, I am honoured to speak today to Bill C-36.

Today, we debate a Conservative bill that purports to comply with the Supreme Court's decision in the Bedford case. Allow me to briefly go over the circumstances that led us here today, debating the bill.

First, we are here today because a group of courageous sex workers challenged in court, and at great expense, the laws that govern prostitution, commonly known as the “Bedford case”. They did so because they wanted to ensure their work could be done in such a way that protected their security. They fought for safety and security not only for themselves, but for all people involved in the sex industry in Canada, and the Supreme Court of Canada agreed with these women.

By way of background, and many Canadians may be unaware of this, prostitution is currently legal in Canada and has been so since the Criminal Code came into force in 1892. It is the many activities surrounding prostitution which the Criminal Code prohibits, including keeping, using, or transporting a person to a bawdy house, living on the avails of prostitution or communicating in public for the purposes of engaging in prostitution. That was the state of the law prior to the Bedford case.

In December 2013, the Supreme Court struck down those sections related to bawdy house, living on the avails of prostitution and communicating for the purposes of prostitution. The court ruled that these provisions violated section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees the right to life, liberty and security of the person. The court also indicated that the provisions made it almost impossible to engage in prostitution in a safe environment, as a person selling could not legally operate indoors or hire security personnel. It was a historic ruling.

The court also provided government with one year to legislate and to do so with the interests of providing a legal framework that protected the safety of sex workers. This is this the government's response. Here, in part, is what the summary of Bill C-36 states:

This enactment amends the Criminal Code to, among other things,

(a) create an offence that prohibits purchasing sexual services or communicating in any place for that purpose;

(b) create an offence that prohibits receiving a material benefit that derived from the commission of an offence referred to in paragraph (a);

(c) create an offence that prohibits the advertisement of sexual services offered for sale and to authorize the courts to order the seizure of materials containing such advertisements and their removal from the Internet;

(d) modernize the offence that prohibits the procurement of persons for the purpose of prostitution;

(e) create an offence that prohibits communicating — for the purpose of selling sexual services — in a public place, or in any place open to public view, that is or is next to a place where persons under the age of 18 can reasonably be expected to be present;

Government Orders

As the justice minister said last week in his press conference and yesterday in his speech, the proposed measures criminalize prostitution for the first time since 1892. It criminalizes advertisement of sexual services and criminalizes communicating in public, which is one of the very components of the existing law that the court had already struck down in Bedford.

It is hardly surprising then that a great many of us in the House, and outside of the House, are concerned about the approach the government is taking. By criminalizing almost all aspects of prostitution, the government claims to have struck a made-in-Canada solution to the so-called Nordic model.

Sadly, Bill C-36 has as much, or more, in common with the prohibitionist approach in force in Albania, Croatia and Russia.

In Russia, brothels are illegal. Under Bill C-36, they would also be illegal in Canada. In Russia, living on the avails of prostitution is illegal. Under Bill C-36, this would also be illegal in Canada. In Russia, buying sex is illegal. Under Bill C-36, this would also be illegal in Canada.

• (1255)

In Russia, selling sex is illegal. Under Bill C-36, except for a few narrow exceptions, it will also be illegal in Canada. Selling sex will be illegal in public, it will be illegal near places where children may be, and it will be illegal with underage prostitutes. The differences between the Russian approach and this so-called made-in-Canada approach are relatively minor. I wonder if those present find it somewhat troubling that a country with Russia's human rights record has a regime governing this social issue that is so close to the legislation before the House today.

The purpose of the Bedford case in the Supreme Court decision was not to pass moral judgment on this activity but rather to provide a legal framework that would make the environment safe for the women and men involved in the sex industry. Therefore, it is incumbent on the Conservatives to introduce a law that provides a legal framework that would make sex work safer. Instead, we have a law that would do the opposite.

Bill C-36 should be about public safety, and I have concerns that the bill falls short of that goal. I am not at all convinced that this bill would protect the women and men who are engaged in sex work. I would also suggest that Bill C-36, in all likelihood, violates the charter with respect to section 7, on life, liberty, and security of the person; with respect to the provisions regarding cruel and unusual punishment; and in respect of the ban on advertising, the charter protection of free speech. One wonders whether the Conservatives and the justice minister know this.

Perhaps they know that this bill is unconstitutional, and perhaps they know that the bill is not consistent with the Supreme Court ruling in the Bedford case. Again, the Conservatives have a duty to comply with the spirit of the Supreme Court ruling in Bedford. I am not convinced that this is the case, and I doubt that the bill meets the letter or the spirit of the Bedford ruling. The one element of the court ruling they seem to have complied with was the one year provided by the Supreme Court to legislate in this matter.

The last couple of times they faced problems with legislation that clearly intersected with the Constitution, the Conservatives did a

couple of things. The two most recent examples are the Senate reference and the Nadon appointment. With respect to the Senate reference, the Conservatives realized that there was a potential conflict with the Constitution and referred the matter to the Supreme Court. With the Nadon appointment, again they realized that there was a potential conflict with existing legislation. They took a couple of steps. First, they sought outside opinions with respect to compliance with the Supreme Court Act, and second, they also made a stated case to the Supreme Court.

In addition, there are provisions within the Department of Justice Act, section 4.1, that come into play with respect to the constitutionality of the legislation. Undoubtedly the government has an opinion pursuant to section 4.1 of the Department of Justice Act.

There is no doubt that this bill is also headed, eventually, to the Supreme Court for adjudication on whether it complies with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, the minister to date has refused to refer the bill to the Supreme Court to ensure its constitutional validity, resorting instead, as we saw yesterday, to personal insults. Nor have the Conservatives given any indication that they will disclose any time soon key evidence to support the bill.

Perhaps this bill is a political stopgap measure to meet the one-year deadline imposed by the Supreme Court. Perhaps the bill is a politically driven document with an overarching purpose, which is to punt this sensitive and important issue beyond the next election. Refusing a referral to the Supreme Court of Canada is consistent with this view.

• (1300)

As I have indicated on many occasions, the Conservatives have a track record of introducing legislation for political and partisan reasons. I hope that is not the case in this instance. I hope it is not the intent of the Conservatives to tee up the fundraising machine on an issue related to the safety of sex workers in Canada, in the context of the bill and the court ruling. I hope that the Conservatives will avoid what they have done so often in the past and will avoid the temptation to place their own political interests first.

I am also concerned about the lack of transparency as it relates to evidence. Why will the Minister of Justice not produce the evidence to support his assertion that the bill is constitutional? Why will he not waive his privilege and release the Department of Justice documents that prove that Bill C-36 passes the charter test, as is required under section 4.1 of the Department of Justice Act? Why will the minister not release any evidence, if he has any, that would support his contention that the bill is charter compliant?

We know that he will not release any charter compliance documents, but the minister is also refusing to release any time soon the \$175,000 study his department conducted on this topic. Canadians want to know why the minister is refusing to release the study, a study paid for with public funds and one that would have material relevance to the five-hour debate before this House and material relevance to the committee hearings that are undoubtedly on the horizon.

Government Orders

Might we speculate as to why the minister would refuse to release that study? Could it be that the study might contain facts or evidence inconvenient to the Conservatives' position or political interests?

As criminal defence lawyer Michael Spratt said in a recent blog about research and the recent cuts made at the justice department:

It is sometimes said that justice is blind—but justice policy should not be....

This is not about politics—quite the opposite—this is about evidence-based policy. It is only when legislation is based on legitimate evidence that there can be any confidence that the law will accomplish its goals.

Perhaps the Conservatives are not really concerned with achieving their criminal justice goals, (i.e., keeping the public safe). They have ignored evidence on drug policy, minimum sentences, and child protection—to name a few (resulting in multiple laws being struck down as unconstitutional).

In the lead-up to introducing this bill, the minister was claiming to have all the evidence he needed. What might that evidence be? The minister seems to be basing his bill in part on an online survey he conducted. A voluntary, non-scientific, online survey cannot be the basis for constructing a bill of such importance, let alone one mandated by the Supreme Court of Canada. We really should be concerned that the government seems to be using a Kijiji approach to public policy.

Also notably absent from this bill is any measurement mechanism. It is often said that we cannot manage it if we do not measure it. There are absolutely no provisions in this bill to collect data on the effectiveness of the measures contained in it. Data collection would help inform future amendments and fiscal measures to help the most vulnerable. The concern over this is magnified when we look at the millions of dollars cut out of the Department of Justice budget with respect to research. The reason given is that all too often the research did not align with government priorities. Against that backdrop, we have the absence of any data collection measures in this bill. It is indeed troubling.

An email was recently sent to the leader of the Liberal Party by a woman named Rachel. She wanted the opportunity to share her story about the impact this legislation will have on her. She wanted someone to listen to her and to the many others who feel similarly. Here is what she wrote:

● (1305)

Bill C-36 horrifies me—it will have a catastrophic effect on my safety and livelihood.

I have been an indoor sex worker for 5 years. I screen clients to ensure my safety. This involves asking for a reference from another sex worker, and then contacting that worker to ensure the potential client was respectful. If it's the client's first time seeing a sex worker, I require their full legal name, employment information, and cell phone number. I have a conversation via phone or email to discuss what services they are seeking, and what I am comfortable providing.... I check the client's information against a bad date list—a compilation of bad clients which is shared among sex workers. I always meet new clients in a public place prior to the session, for example: a coffee shop or the lobby of their hotel.

Because I am able to screen my clients, I have NEVER experienced violence during my 5 years in sex work. If you criminalize my clients, they will be unwilling to provide the screening information I require to ensure my safety. I will not have any client information to add to a bad date list should something go wrong. If they've seen a sex worker in the past, they will not want to provide that reference because it will mean they are admitting to committing a crime. I will be forced to accept clients that block their phone number, hide their identity, and have no references. This is a gift to sexual predators posing as clients.

Like 90% of sex workers in Canada, I work from an indoor space, known as an "incall". If I am assaulted in my workspace, due to my inability to screen my clients, I will be unable to contact the police, as this would reveal the address of my incall

location. This means police can easily arrest my good clients as they come to see me at my safe indoor location. I also risk being evicted by my landlord.

Bill C-36 will have an even worse impact on street based sex workers, who also rely on screening their clients to ensure safety. Street based workers need time to refer to bad date lists, to negotiate safer sex practices (such as condom use), and to assess the client. Bad date lists may include the time and date of an incident, a description of the vehicle, a licence plate number, a description of the person, etc. If clients are criminalized and fearful of arrest, they will try to speed up the process limiting the time a sex worker has to vet their client, and refer to a bad date list. Sex workers will be forced to jump into a vehicle with a client without taking these vital safety measures. They will be forced to work in isolated areas away from police, so their fearful clients will continue to see them. Bill C-36 is a gift to predators posing as clients.

This bill will not stop sex workers from working, it will just impede their ability to work safely.

The letter closes with:

Bill C-36 will kill sex workers if it is passed.

History will look poorly on this government for many reasons: the deliberate division, the attack on people who disagree, the politicizing of criminal law, the abuse of power, election fraud, and the list goes on, but I believe that what the government is doing here today with this bill is particularly concerning.

The government's history of politicizing every issue causes us great concern about what it has done with the bill before the House. Never should the interests of a political party trump the safety of Canadians.

Many people believe that Bill C-36 will hurt people, and it will potentially force sex workers into the back alleys without the protection they need.

Parliament has a duty to protect Canadians, whether or not we personally morally agree with their profession. The Conservatives have a duty to obey the letter and the spirit of the Supreme Court ruling in the Bedford case. On all these counts, the Conservatives have failed and are doing so for political reasons, and for that they will have to live with the consequences should Bill C-36 be enacted by Parliament.

● (1310)

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of concerns about the opposition to the bill. A lot of the opposition is based on the assumption that the current status quo is full legalization.

In the sex worker's letter he quoted, the lady was describing activities that are already illegal. Advertising, soliciting sexual services, and doing it both online and in public are already illegal activities. If these people are already willing to give their information during this illegal activity, I am not sure why they would not under this new legislation.

Government Orders

This legislation actually does meet the spirit of the Supreme Court ruling. It was clear in its ruling that it was not only open to it but was requesting that Parliament seek legislation around prostitution. To just decriminalize it or legalize it all we would have to do is let the year go by. It was clear that it wanted to do something more than just get rid of all legislation.

I would like the member to comment on this and explain how this does not meet the spirit of the Supreme Court ruling.

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, when the member says that many of the complaints raised by Rachel in her letter to our leader are already illegal, perhaps he should be reminded that if we take that statement as true, there is a Supreme Court of Canada decision that says the laws that make whatever conduct he says is illegal are unconstitutional.

If we take what he says as true, that these parties are engaging in illegal activity, the highest court in our land has said that the laws that make it an illegal activity do not withstand the scrutiny of the charter.

The second part of the member's question was exactly how does this offend Bedford. In the Bedford decision, Parliament was directed to focus on the safety and the security of the most vulnerable in our population. Instead of focusing on their safety and security, in many places and in many aspects, the legislation makes them criminal.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for a very thoughtful and analytical discussion. The government cut funding to the Status of Women, closed 12 of 16 regional offices, defunded the National Association for Women and the Law, CRIAW, undermined pay equity, changed EI, and jeopardized women in low-income and part-time work, provided no national child care program, no housing, said no to an inquiry into the murder of 1,200 aboriginal women. It now purports to care about women?

Conservatives have made it very clear over the last eight years that they have no regard and they are not interested at all in the welfare of women. How can we possibly trust them to look after the most vulnerable of women?

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I frankly could not agree more. What we have seen with the government is a single-minded obsession with balancing the budget and everything else is way down the list. Veterans are way down the list. Charter rights are way down the list. Certainly in this case, sex workers who have had the benefit of a Supreme Court decision are well down the list.

It is a sad indicator on where we are in Parliament today that the single-minded obsession with matters of finance have put the rights of individuals and the charter and the interests of the regions as far down the list as it has. Unfortunately, such is the world in which we presently live.

• (1315)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to my colleague from Charlottetown, the Canadian Federation of University Women is a group that has been staunchly supporting the so-called Nordic approach based on women's equality and based on reducing violence and exploitation of women and children. It has

responded to the Conservative government's bill by issuing a press release strongly criticizing the bill for criminalizing vulnerable women in the sex trade.

Could my colleague please explain why criminalizing prostitution further endangers these victims of exploitation?

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I believe much of the answer is found in the letter to our leader from Rachel.

There is no more striking example than the provisions within the bill with respect to those who are underage. I could think of no one in the context of the Bedford decision who is more vulnerable than an underage prostitute working the streets. The bill criminalizes anyone who is under age 18 for communicating for the purpose of prostitution. It singles out the most vulnerable and puts a criminal sanction on their work.

The result of this would be to push everything into the shadows. As Rachel so eloquently said, this is a gift to sexual predators posing as clients.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the member's colleague, the member for Malpeque and the Liberal critic for public safety, agreed with the NDP critic for justice and myself that the majority of the women who find themselves in this ugly trade are in fact exploited. By the way, we did not say that it is 51% who are exploited. The studies we have seen show that it is more like 90% of the women are exploited, and some would say it is higher than that. Do we not have an obligation as parliamentarians to protect those people?

Earlier today, Katarina MacLeod, a former sex worker, appeared at a press conference and told her story. She detailed a harrowing story of abuse, rape, and exploitation starting at the age of five when she was molested, and it lasted through her 15 years as a sex worker. She went on to say that if Bill C-36, the government's proposed prostitution legislation, had been around when she was a sex worker, there would have been no demand and no supply, and that maybe she would be less scarred today. She said, "I can tell you there is no safe location for prostitution". Not inside, not out on the streets.

I wonder if the member could comment on that as well as on protecting our communities.

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely do have an obligation to protect those most vulnerable. That is what the Supreme Court of Canada has directed Parliament to do. However, Bill C-36 would fail in that regard. The bill would drive prostitution into the dark corners. It would make it less safe. It would not, in any way, protect the most vulnerable. In fact, it would have the opposite effect.

The decision to double down on criminal sanctions in the face of a complex social problem is absolutely consistent with what we have seen with the Conservative government. When the only thing one has in one's tool kit is a sledgehammer, everything looks like a rock. If there is a complex social problem, the Conservatives have a mandatory minimum for that. The very problem with the over-arching approach of the current government is that when faced with complex social problems, the Conservatives seem to always have a one-size-fits-all solution.

Government Orders

Criminalizing the very people who need protection is the wrong way to go, but, sadly, that is the approach that has been chosen.

• (1320)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and speak to Bill C-36, the protection of communities and exploited persons act. As my hon. colleagues know, this bill is the first of its kind in Canada. It is historic. For the first time in Canada's history the buying of sexual services would be illegal. For the first time, women trafficked into prostitution would not be treated as nuisances, but with dignity. For the first time, the Government of Canada would provide robust funding to help women and youth escape prostitution and their traffickers.

I want to begin by addressing one of the key myths that is being spread by the pro-legalization lobby. What Canadians have been told over the past week in the newspapers and other media is that prostitution is a legitimate occupation for women and that it is entirely separate from sex trafficking and exploitation. This is a lie. Prostitution exploits women, youth, and vulnerable populations. It escalates gender inequalities by turning women's bodies into a commodity to be bought, sold, rented, and exploited by men. In short, prostitution provides an avenue for abuse and violence.

Research of prostitution in Canada and abroad reveals that women in prostitution, whether by coercion or by choice, experience alarming levels of violence and abuse. One of the clearest links between prostitution and human trafficking is found in a recent empirical analysis of human trafficking trends in over 150 countries. Researchers at the University of Goettingen's Department of Economics found that, on average, legalizing prostitution increases human trafficking inflows.

The inseparable link between prostitution and sex trafficking has been recognized and adopted across political lines in Canada. In 2007, the report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, of which I was the vice-chair, adopted this position. "Turning Outrage into Action" said:

Like the majority of witnesses appearing before us, we came to the conclusion that prostitution is closely linked to trafficking in persons.

That is our own parliamentary report. It goes on to say:

We believe that prostitution is a form of violence and a violation of human rights. The Committee feels that the prostitute's consent is irrelevant, because you can never consent to sexual exploitation.

This position was supported by the Conservative, Liberal, and NDP members who sat on the committee. The members for London—Fanshawe, York West, and Ahuntsic all sat on the committee with me and will remember the compelling evidence that we heard from survivors.

Let me be clear. Prostitution is the avenue or means for pimps and traffickers to sell women and youth. We cannot separate this fact, and we cannot separate prostitution from sex trafficking. Prostitution is the means for sex traffickers to profit off the exploitation and abuse of others by pimps. If Canada wants to seriously reduce sex trafficking, it must target those who drive prostitution through demand, namely, the johns. It must also target those who profit from and facilitate it, namely, the pimps. That is why Bill C-36 would make buying sex illegal for the first time, and it would significantly strengthen provisions against pimps and traffickers.

It has been appalling to hear from pro-legalization lobbyists over the past weeks that criminalizing the demand would make things more unsafe for women in prostitution and that it would have devastating consequences. This argument is absolutely absurd. One study that interviewed 100 prostitutes in Vancouver found that violence is the norm for women in prostitution. Sexual harassment, verbal abuse, stalking, rape, battering, and torture are the points on a continuum of violence, all of which occur regularly in prostitution.

This violence is perpetrated by johns and pimps. Let us be realistic. When looking to buy sex, a john is not concerned with whether the prostitute is free, underage, or trafficked, nor is he going to ask. In his mind, he wants to buy sex because he has been taught that it is acceptable to buy people to be used at his disposal. That is why we want to target johns.

There has been a paradigm shift that is so important in this country. Canada's approach must recognize that prostitution itself, not just violence, is a form of violence.

• (1325)

For over a century, the violence and the exploitation of women and youth in prostitution have been ignored. The historical approach to prostitution in our great country has never recognized the harms of prostitution. It has focused only on hiding it from public view by incorporating offences based on the nuisance of prostitution in the Criminal Code. Regarded as public nuisances, prostituted individuals were arrested and criminalized at much higher rates than the men creating the demand for commercial sex.

This profoundly misguided approach to prostitution and the treatment of prostitutes changed in this month, on June 4, 2014. This shift in the approach to prostitution is clearly evident in the preamble to Bill C-36, which states:

...the Parliament of Canada recognizes the social harm caused by the objectification of the human body and the commodification of sexual activity...

The preamble also highlights the goals of the new legislation:

...to protect human dignity and the equality of all Canadians by discouraging prostitution, which has a disproportionate impact on women and children...

The average age of entry into prostitution in this country is between 14 and 16 years of age. These are children.

Second, the preamble says:

...it is important to denounce and prohibit the purchase of sexual services because it creates a demand for prostitution...

Third, the preamble says:

Government Orders

...Parliament wishes to encourage those who engage in prostitution to report incidents of violence and to leave prostitution.

Another indicator of this fundamental paradigm shift is in the location of the new offences in our Criminal Code. Previously, before this bill, all prostitution-related offences were located in part VII of the Criminal Code, under “Disorderly Houses, Gaming and Betting”. The new offences target the purchase of sexual services and target pimps. These offences will now be located in part VIII of the Criminal Code, under “Offences Against the Person and Reputation”. This is a distinct acknowledgement that the act of buying sexual services is an offence against an individual. It is an offence against the most vulnerable individuals in our society, who are enslaved by a violent pimp, poverty, or drug addiction.

It is for this reason that this new approach will be supported by \$20 million in new funding, including support for grassroots organizations that help individuals exit prostitution. It is essential that with new legislation we provide support to organizations that help women escape prostitution from all circumstances.

As a nation, we are at a crossroads in this country at this moment, but this is not an experiment in which we can play with the lives and freedoms of future generations. The other option for Canada is to legalize or fully decriminalize prostitution. This approach will also lead Canada into a fundamental paradigm shift to regulate prostitution like any other industry.

It is an appalling shift that would have a severe negative impact on women and youth. I am shocked that such legislation has been advocated by prominent members of the NDP front bench and adopted as party policy. That is also what I am listening to this morning from the Liberals.

Legalization has also been adopted as an official party policy by the Green Party of Canada, to the dismay of many of its members. On a blog post on the official website of the Green Party, Green Party blogger Steve May offers the following critique of this Green Party policy:

I believe it is the wrong policy for our Party at any time, but especially at this time when so many voices, such as Victor Malarek's, are now just starting to be heard about the fiasco which sex trade legalization has caused elsewhere in the world.

We do not have to wait 10 to 20 years to see how legalization of prostitution works out. We only have to look to countries that legalized prostitution 10 to 15 years ago. Let us look at Germany, where prostitution has been fully legalized and regulated as an industry since 2001.

The deputy chairman of the German Police Association stated:

...politicians have shot themselves in the foot by implementing this law. Even though it was well intended, it has only strengthened the criminals.

Some prosecutors, also from Germany, have admitted that it made their work in prosecuting trafficking in human persons more difficult.

Also, in 2013 Germany's leading online paper, *Der Spiegel* interviewed a retired detective, who stated:

Germany has become a centre for sexual abuse of young women from Eastern Europe, and a playground for organized criminals from all over the world.

●(1330)

German police and women's groups now view legalization as little more than a subsidy program for pimps that makes the market more attractive to human traffickers.

Today there are over 400,000 prostitutes filling brothels located along the borders of that country. Brothels openly advertise “sex with all women as long as you want, as often as you want, any way that you want”, “sex, oral sex, oral sex without a condom, three-ways, group sex, gang bang”. Women are reduced to a sexual commodity to be used by sex buyers and disposed of when they are done. This is the future that the official opposition, along with the Green Party, is proposing for Canadian women and youth.

Let us look at another implication of the policies of the NDP and the Green Party, and now we have heard from the Liberal Party as well. If prostitution were to be legalized and treated as an industry, women would be expected to apply for all job openings before being eligible for EI, so if our daughters have just been laid off, they would be expected to apply at the local brothel before being eligible for EI. That is not the future I want for my daughters and it is not the future that Canadian parents want for their children.

We should also look at the New Zealand model, which has been brought up quite often. It is often cited by the pro-legalization lobby as a perfect example of decriminalization. However, this is far from the reality of the facts.

The National Council of Women in New Zealand stated that “The only winners from the prostitution reform act 2003 are men” and that they are “still seeing girls as young as 13 and 14 years old on the streets selling their bodies”.

The council also said that researchers found that human trafficking in children had increased since 2003, especially in ethnic minority groups. Over 10 years after decriminalization, New Zealand's aboriginal populations were still significantly overrepresented and among the most vulnerable in street prostitution. We know this is also true for Canadian aboriginals, and it would only increase under legalization.

In 2012, the Prime Minister of New Zealand stated that he did not think the act had achieved a reduction in street and under-age prostitution at all.

A shift toward the legalization or normalization of prostitution in Canada is advocated by prominent NDP members and the Green Party. This would be disastrous for women's equality and for our aboriginal populations and other populations. It would turn the clock back years for women's equality.

When Bill C-36 was tabled a week ago in the House, I was stunned to see how many journalists became constitutional legal experts overnight. They seem interested in speaking to the well-paid representatives of the pro-legalization lobby, who decried the bill as the worst thing that could ever happen to women in prostitution. We should not kid ourselves. Huge profits are made by a few people in prostitution, and the adult industry stands to lose a lot of income.

Government Orders

The media largely ignored the front-line agencies that work with women in prostitution, the families of victims, and, most importantly, survivors themselves. I want to share their voices and experience with the House.

Katarina MacLeod, a survivor, says:

As an ex-prostitute who spent 15 years being raped and degraded daily, I had no one to turn to and there were no resources. ... Prostitution damages your mind body and soul. This why I am in total support of Bill C-36 which offers these woman an exit strategy....

This is from the daughter of a prostituted woman:

I was very relieved to hear that Bill C-36 is going to be implemented. ... I am glad our voices are being heard. My mother was a prostitute and I want no women or her children to have to experience that damage. I am in agreement with bill C-36 since it will be getting at the root of this issue, which is the people who purchase sex. As well as providing help for the women to exit this lifestyle, which is very necessary.

This is from the parents of a young woman who was brutally beaten by her pimp and later found murdered. They wrote to the Minister of Justice saying:

...it is our belief and our experience that tells us that if buying sex and selling others for sex was illegal, our daughter would still be alive and would be living a fulfilling and satisfying life. We strongly urge you to use this opportunity to enact new laws that would severely penalize those who buy sex, (the johns) and sell others for sex, (the pimps). Please act to protect the vulnerable and stop the exploitation and violence against young women and girls.

I want to note that front-line agencies and women's groups have raised a concern about the clause that would prohibit the selling of sex around public places where youth can be found, like schools and community centres. Some have said that the intent of this clause is focused on preventing youth from being solicited by johns, and this is a very good thing.

• (1335)

However, front-line agencies—who, I must emphasize, are strongly supportive of everything else in this bill—are concerned about unintended consequences that the clause could have on vulnerable women in prostitution. These are valid concerns, and I hope they will bring these concerns and suggestions forward when Bill C-36 is studied at committee.

It is my hope that Bill C-36 will be supported by members on all sides of the House. Having spoken to many MPs privately, I know support for the approach proposed in Bill C-36 does indeed cross party lines. There are many good people on all sides of this House who are supporting this bill. As parliamentarians, we share a collective desire for Canada to be a leader on human rights in the international community.

Proponents of legalized prostitution claim that it is the only option for a progressive society. I disagree. A truly progressive society encourages the equality and dignity of women, not the prostitution of women. I want to build a Canada that targets predators and pimps, helps vulnerable individuals escape prostitution, and upholds the dignity of women. We can do better for women and youth, and we must.

We have always heard about the Bedford case, and we hear voices across the way saying, “Oh, it is going to have a constitutional challenge.” I must remind those members that it was actually the Supreme Court that sent it to Parliament to build something new. This is what the Supreme Court said: “It will be for Parliament,

should it choose to do so, to devise a new approach, reflecting different elements of the existing regime”.

The Supreme Court of Canada did something very wise. Instead of bringing down the law and saying, “This is the law”, it allowed 12 months for Parliament to reflect. I have to tell the House that thousands of people are watching these speeches today. Thousands of people are listening to individual MPs and what they are saying. Thirty-one thousand responses came. In my office today I have postcards that I have not even talked about. There are 36,000 signatures on petitions and over 50,000 signatures on postcards. This is Canada; I do not know all these people.

I have worked with sex workers and trafficking victims for a very long time. Since this bill was tabled, I have had a myriad of emails. Very many people want to come to the committee and support Bill C-36. They talk about maybe making little tweaks so we could do better.

The country is listening. The country is listening to the fact that here in Canada, members on all sides of the House have to ensure that we target the johns and ensure without a doubt that we provide programs and exit systems for prostitutes and trafficking victims, because behind the scenes the story that does not get out is about the bullying, the terrible threats, the coercion.

I heard from one 16-year-old girl whose boyfriend paid for a lot of things for her and then said, “You owe me \$4,000 and you have to service Glen in the next room”. He was a trafficker. She was not going to do it. She said, “You're my boyfriend. I don't have to do that”. He said, “Yes, you do. I know where your sister goes to school. I know where she does her sports activities. We will get her if you don't do this”, and so that 16-year-old did it.

She got out. She is out of the trafficking ring now, and she is speaking out. We hear these voices all across this country.

This Parliament has to be responsible and support Bill C-36.

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her passionate speech. I would not expect any less. Anyone who knows her or has seen her in action during the study of her private member's bill by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights knows how passionate she is about the human trafficking issue.

Now I am seeing her in another light, as we are focusing on prostitution and the action to be taken in the wake of the Bedford decision. I will present my arguments a little later. First, she spoke to us about treating victims with dignity. I will ask her the question that came to mind in English, so that she can answer right away, since she will not have missed a single word of it.

[*English*]

How does clause 15 amount to treating the prostitutes with dignity? I am curious to know her opinion on that matter.

Government Orders

She is a proponent of the Nordic model. Everyone who is a proponent of the Nordic model said that it is needed. We cannot just have the Nordic model, where we criminalize the johns, the buyers, without putting substantial amounts of money into getting the prostitutes out of the business. How can she look at me seriously and say that \$20 million for a country like ours, with a problem that big, is enough money? It is laughable, and all the people who would support the bill are in shock about that.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, it is easy to look at her, because I am very proud. This is not the Nordic model. It is a made-in-Canada model. Speaking of that \$20 million, my goodness, look at how big Canada is and how big the United States is, and when the United States first did this, it first put in \$10 million. We put in \$20 million, right off the bat.

This is a wonderful first step. I am proud of it, and I will look anyone in the eye because the paradigm has shifted. We now look at the survivors, the victims of human trafficking, with dignity and compassion. That is what our government has done. It has showed compassion. We also targeted the johns. They do not get off scot-free anymore.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there were actually more than a few things in her speech with which we could agree. The Liberal Party is in support of the measures that are contained in the bill that govern human trafficking. If they could be hived off, that would be something we could support. What we do not support are the potential constitutional problems.

The member spent much of her speech talking about the awful situation in countries that have legalized or decriminalized prostitution, such as Germany. There were options available to the government. She spoke passionately against one, legalization or decriminalization. The other option, which the government has chosen, which is really the approach used in Russia, with a few tweaks, is a prohibitionist model. Would she not agree that there were other options in the middle that would be closer to what the Supreme Court of Canada directed and would more properly and more adequately protect those who are vulnerable?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I think his question is a little misguided. Actually, this is what the Supreme Court said:

It will be for Parliament, should it choose to do so, to devise a new approach, [a made-in-Canada approach] reflecting different elements of the existing regime.

I have talked about many different countries. We live in the best country in the world. The true north, strong and free, is right here in Canada. What our government has done has the right balance. The right balance is targeting the johns. The right balance is a compassionate view and an acknowledgement of what has happened to the victims and the survivors. The \$20 million is a great first step to make it happen.

•(1345)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I feel privileged to ask a question of the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, who is a model and a source of inspiration for our government in its fight against human trafficking and for the victims of prostitution.

I want to commend the remarkable work of our colleague. We are very proud to stand with her in this party. She has been a great source

of inspiration. She met this morning with people who have been victims of prostitution and have been able to exit. I would like to hear this from the member. Is it important for our government to put exit strategies in place for those victims of prostitution? What is the profile of those individuals? Who is the typical person this bill is aimed at supporting and helping?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the public safety minister, for this very important question, and I commend all of his great work on this file.

I have met with many trafficked victims. Trafficked victims are vulnerable, beautiful, young women and, these last five years, more and more young boys. The bill would provide them the freedom to be able to leave prostitution or the claws of human traffickers and start new lives. This bill would also make the buying of sex illegal, so the traffickers would not be the big bullies anymore. They would be marginalized.

Canada has made a tremendous statement. It has said that this country will not allow youth—because the youth enter prostitution, on the average, between 14 and 16 years of age—and others to be bought and sold. There is no typical person. It is the predator who looks at the opportunity to draw them in.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech and all the work she has been able to do.

I think it would be important to add a few things. I listened to my opposition colleagues, and after analyzing the Bedford decision and the bill from start to finish, I think that it would hold up constitutionally. I will explain why.

The Bedford decision states that in the current legal context, we cannot criminalize the practice of prostitution. The decision also tells legislators to decide on the legal context that will be put in place to deal with prostitution. The government decided to declare prostitution illegal.

In doing so, the government has established its right to criminalize certain players as pimps and johns. In addition, the government gave immunity to prostitutes. In my opinion, this approach is the fairest for Canada. It presents a Canadian model and, on that point, I hand it to them.

However, I disagree with criminalizing prostitutes in a public place. When immunity is adopted, it must be provided across the board, be it in massage parlours or in public places.

I would encourage the government to reconsider its position because criminalizing johns acting in public view is enough. Criminalizing pimps acting in public view is enough.

There is no need to criminalize prostitutes working in public places. This is how we can give these women, the most vulnerable people on the streets, the opportunity to report the people who assault them.

I would like to propose a friendly amendment.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for her support of the bill and her very good comments.

This bill has a really good balance. I was a school teacher for 23 years, and people had to report to the office when they came in. There were pedophiles outside the fence who would lure the older girls. With this bill, we would be protecting the children too. It is not so much the prostitutes; it is the johns. The johns not only solicit the prostitutes or the trafficked women, but if they see attractive girls, they will go after them as well. It the bill has a nice balance. There is no arresting of the prostitutes, but that is something we need to bring to committee and hammer out at committee, where those concerns can come forward.

• (1350)

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is not exactly a clear-cut debate. The member for Ahuntsic was saying that the government had decreed that prostitution was illegal, but that it was not saying that prostitution is now illegal in Canada. Selling is okay, but buying is not, and under some circumstances, selling is not okay.

With Bill C-36, the government tried to take considerable liberties, but it did not have the courage or the deep conviction to do what the member for Kildonan—St. Paul would like to see. The member took great pains to talk about all aspects related to pimps and vulnerable people, but she did not give very good answers to questions about the major problem with Bill C-36: clause 15. This clause criminalizes the very women, the very victims that the Conservatives go on and on about wanting to protect.

Positions aside, we all take our role seriously. I take my role as the official opposition's justice critic seriously, especially when I have to go before the NDP caucus, where it is not always easy to make recommendations.

The member for Kildonan—St. Paul is quite right in saying that we all have concerns about prostitution and human trafficking. However, it is not always easy to enforce laws that comply with the Constitution and our charter, since this government is extremely secretive.

Instead of sharing its information with us, the government introduced Bill C-36 at first reading, which was a response to a Supreme Court ruling. We are not asking for 15 legal opinions. We only want one opinion of the Supreme Court assuring us that the clauses of Bill C-36 are in compliance. This would make us feel more confident that we had a solid foundation. We are often forced to rely on our own resources, which are not government resources, to try to fulfill our common obligation as members of the House.

We sometimes have to enforce laws and set aside our own personal convictions. The other day, a news report made it clear just how passionate the member for Kildonan—St. Paul is about this issue. I understood her personal and religious convictions, and I respect that. However, in my role as justice critic, I need to examine laws and sometimes set my personal convictions aside. That is part of my role as representative for the people of Gatineau.

The government is so secretive that it is more than happy to use this expeditious process on an issue as important as prostitution, the world's oldest profession. Good luck to anyone who thinks they can get rid of it. We are all working to ensure that one day no one will feel the need to turn to prostitution. We hope that one day people will choose this line of work solely because of their own personal choices or beliefs. We are doing everything we can do achieve that, but no method in the world is perfect.

The government did a quick online consultation but no one has no idea how scientifically valid it is. It did not deny the fact that pretty much anyone was able to say whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted. We do not know where the responses came from; we do not have all of the details.

• (1355)

However, the government is not making that scientific poll public, and it will not release it unless it is forced to do so. I believe that it will not share the information before the end of July, based on how the minister has responded to questions in the House.

We will likely be examining Bill C-36 by then, given that it is subject to a time allocation motion. We will vote on it tomorrow, if not today. The committee will meet in early July, so that leads me to believe that we will have the opportunity to study the bill, but without that information. I find that unfortunate.

As I said, we rely on our resources. This bill is important to me; I want to do the right thing.

When I make a recommendation to my colleagues, I want it to be based not on my convictions and my own impressions, but on a careful analysis of the Bedford decision and on consultations. Like many here in the House, I consulted a lot of people. Many people wanted to talk to me about every aspect of this issue.

I heard from those who are advocating decriminalization and others who want prostitution to be legalized. Groups came to talk to me about the Nordic model. I heard from sex workers. Some of them like the idea of the Nordic model, others do not. I met with nearly every individual and every group that will come in July to tell us what they think about the issue.

I always shared my concerns with everyone I spoke to, and I think that we came to a consensus about the issue of safety.

As for the issue of safety, I believe it is very important to repeat the points made by the Supreme Court of Canada. The government and various Conservative members who spoke before me took a bit of liberty when quoting the Supreme Court. They attributed to the Supreme Court some things that it did not necessarily say, or they omitted, probably because it is to their advantage, certain aspects or certain words in some phrases, which are worth their weight in gold.

Statements by Members

When we go out into our constituencies and people talk to us about prostitution, they all refer to the Bedford ruling. What is the Bedford ruling? I think it is important to review the main principles established in the Bedford ruling to determine whether Bill C-36 is in keeping with the ruling and whether it will pass the test included in that ruling. I am reading from the ruling:

...current or former prostitutes, brought an application seeking declarations that three provisions of the Criminal Code, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-46, which criminalize various activities related to prostitution, infringe their rights under s. 7 of the Charter...

Despite Bill C-36, section 7 of the charter still exists.

What are the three provisions?

...s. 210 makes it an offence to keep or be in a bawdy-house; s. 212(1)(j) prohibits living on the avails of prostitution; and, s. 213(1)(c) prohibits communicating in public for the purposes of prostitution. They argued that these restrictions on prostitution put the safety and lives of prostitutes at risk, by preventing them from implementing certain safety measures—such as hiring security guards or “screening” potential clients—that could protect them from violence. B, L and S also alleged that s. 213(1)(c) infringes the freedom of expression guarantee under s. 2(b) of the Charter, and that none of the provisions are saved under s. 1.

Everyone knows that the charter can be violated. If it is all right in a free and democratic society, it passes the test of section 1. Those were the arguments made by the three plaintiffs in the case.

I will spare you everything that was said in the Supreme Court, but suffice it to say that the three plaintiffs won on every count. Sections 210, 212(1)(j) and 213(1)(c) of the Criminal Code were declared incompatible with the charter. The declaration of invalidity was suspended for one year, giving the government time—

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I am sorry, but the time provided for the consideration of government orders has expired. As a result, the hon. member for Gatineau will have 10 minutes remaining after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

CITY OF ARVIDA

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have recently had the honour of being appointed, with 17 other public figures in my region, to the Club des ambassadeurs d'Arvida, the historic capital of aluminum. The objective of the Club des ambassadeurs is to have UNESCO recognize and protect Arvida.

This small labour city, which stands out for its urban planning and industrial infrastructure, is unique in the world. Its first 270 houses were built in 135 days. In 2012, Arvida was recognized as a national historic site of Canada.

Like all my constituents, I wish to help showcase the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region on the international stage. A good way to do this would be to ensure the sustainability of Arvida, a place steeped in our collective history that exhibits the beauty and style of the so-called French-Canadian houses.

To conclude, I invite all my colleagues in the House to come and admire this industrial city that was built on our natural resources and the courage of the workers in my region.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to represent my great riding of Vancouver South, gateway to the Asia-Pacific, where growing economies provide a rich opportunity for Canada to play an ever more important role as we expand our trade and people-to-people ties between our diverse communities with those diverse nations.

In addition to serving my constituents as their member of Parliament, I am also the co-chair of the Canada-China Legislative Association. In this role, I was pleased to welcome a senior delegation to Vancouver and Ottawa this week, which travelled here to explore how Canada's first-rate AAA finance sector weathered the global downturn of 2008 and how our two countries could work together to open China's financial sector to become more international and market-based and to learn about Canada's many leading-edge green technologies that have been supported by some \$18 billion of investment by our government, which can help China reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate its environmental challenges.

I am pleased to report that these meetings between China and Canada have been very productive.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, contrary to false claims by the government, it has dragged its heels on action to deliver on our nation's commitments to reduce greenhouse gases.

Regulations for the coal-fired power sector still allow Canadian plants to emit carbon for many coming decades. Clear evidence that these regulations are weak is that the minute they were issued, Alberta's coal-fired generators withdrew from the carbon capture pilot project. The government has failed to trigger investment in available cleaner technologies.

While the government mocks U.S. action on its largest carbon source, thermal electric plants, it abjectly refuses to regulate Canada's fastest-growing source, the oil sands.

The International Energy Agency says that trillions are needed to address the dual global energy and climate crises, and has called for substantial investment in green energy and efficiency. The Prime Minister refuses to hear this message. Instead, it is the same tired refrain that only oil delivers jobs.

Statements by Members

Wake up, Canada. We could be part of the fastest-growing global economic sector: green energy.

* * *

THE PHILIPPINES

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to welcome a delegation of Filipinos from across Ontario to Parliament Hill to celebrate the 116th anniversary of the Philippines' independence. The visit was marked by the flag of the Philippines being raised on Parliament Hill as songs were sung and children danced.

We are so fortunate in Canada to have so many Canadians of Filipino descent. In fact, my riding of York Centre has one of the largest Filipino communities in Canada. It is a community of great warmth, strong family values, and hard work. We welcome them all to our Canadian family.

This was demonstrated no better than when Typhoon Yolanda struck the Philippines, devastating the country with substantial loss of life. Families were uprooted from their homes. Canadians and our government immediately rallied behind our Canadian Filipino family, with financial assistance to the tune of \$170 million. It is a testament to the Filipino community that so many Canadians of all ethnic backgrounds donated to help their Filipino friends and neighbours.

On behalf of the residents of York Centre, *Araw ng Kasarainlan*.

* * *

●(1405)

POINTE-CLAIRE CANOE CLUB

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I had the pleasure of attending the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Pointe-Claire Canoe Club.

The club was founded by Jean Fournel, along with Bill Corder, Gaetan Desmarais, Maurice Lamoureux, and Tom Dienstmann. Jean himself competed as a kayaker at the 1976 Montreal summer games.

[*Translation*]

Before his premature death in 1997, Jean trained many young athletes, including his daughter, Émilie, who competed as a kayaker in the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games, and his son, Hugues, who also competed as a kayaker in the London games.

Kayaking is a family passion. Jean's wife, Guylaine St-Georges, was also a member of the Canadian national kayak team and participated in the Pan American Games.

[*English*]

The Pointe-Claire Canoe Club is home to Canadian sprint canoeer Thomas Hall, who won bronze in Beijing in 2008, and to champion paracanoeer Christine Gauthier.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating the Pointe-Claire Canoe Club on this milestone anniversary.

KRISTA JOHNSTON MEMORIAL RUN FOR CHANGE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Krista Johnston Memorial Run for Change is set to hit downtown Pembroke this Saturday. The run was started four years ago by Pembroke's Krista Johnston, with the goal of raising \$1,000 to support The Grind, the Salvation Army youth centre. The run ended up raising over \$5,000. Krista hoped the run would also have the effect of inspiring young people to embrace a healthier, more positive future.

Tragically, Krista died on October 18, 2012, here in Ottawa, when she was struck by a car while cycling near Carleton University. The run was renamed the Krista Johnston Memorial Run for Change in her memory, and the 2013 run saw over 800 participants and raised over \$15,000 for Pembroke area charities and youth fitness initiatives.

I ask all members of the House to join me in wishing all participants a great run this weekend.

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ITALIAN WEEK

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Italian Week in Ottawa. This celebration of Ottawa's Italian-Canadian community is one of the most cherished traditions of our city. From food to music to dance, this week celebrates all aspects of Italian culture and heritage.

As the member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre, I have been fortunate to work with members of the local Italian community, including small business owners on Corso Italia and Via Marconi. I was pleased to join them and many others for the opening of this year's festival. Italian Week 2014 has been truly exceptional, a worthy tribute to the important contributions of Italian Canadians who have made our city fantastic for over 100 years.

I thank all of the dedicated volunteers and sponsors who have made Italian Week Ottawa successful for four decades. I congratulate this year's organizers for their achievements. To all the members of the Italian community in Ottawa, *grazie e a presto*.

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PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, *Mabuhay*. On June 12, Filipino Canadians across the country celebrate a very special occasion, Philippine Independence Day, and today marks the 160th anniversary of the declaration of Philippine independence from Spanish colonial rule.

In my riding of North Vancouver, we host the largest Philippine Independence Day festival in British Columbia, organized by the Metro Vancouver Philippine Arts and Cultural Exposition Society.

This is a great opportunity to celebrate the diversity and rich cultural heritage of the Philippines. Booths filled with tantalizing aromas from traditional foods and drinks offer everything from chicken adobo to sweet pastry ensaymadas. Local businesses also showcase their products and services, making it another great opportunity for the whole community to come together. This is a wonderful day to spend with family and friends and an important day to celebrate the strong ties our two nations share. Having recently visited Manila, I can say more than ever just how similar our values of freedom, peace, and democracy are.

To all I say, *Maligayang Araw ng Kalayaan*.

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TRINITY WESTERN LAW SCHOOL

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Trinity Western University is a private Christian university in Langley, British Columbia. It is a place of rigorous scholarship that focuses on the preparation of graduates to practise law while emphasizing ethics, professionalism, and service to the community. Students join the school's Christian community and pledge to respect standards on the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman. This is a choice they freely make.

It needs to be noted that Trinity Western's law school graduates are fully qualified to practise law. There is just one problem: their views are not acceptable to those who rule the Law Society of Upper Canada. Unless they abandon their views and accept the beliefs of those who rule the law society, these students will not be permitted to practise law in Ontario, as the graduates of other law schools can.

Its policy seems to be contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 2, which guarantees Canadians' right to freedom of conscience and religion and freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression.

I call on the Law Society of Upper Canada to reverse its discriminatory and intolerant decision regarding Trinity Western Law graduates.

* * *

● (1410)

OIL INDUSTRY

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no way to make the northern gateway pipeline safe. One bitumen spill would be catastrophic, and even Enbridge admits that spills happen.

British Columbians oppose this project, but B.C.'s 21 Conservative MPs have abandoned even their own voters by siding with the big oil companies, and it is not just on northern gateway. Kinder Morgan has applied to build another massive crude oil pipeline from Edmonton to my riding of Burnaby—Douglas. A recent *Langley Today* editorial entitled “Why Aren't our MPs Protecting Us from Kinder Morgan?” slams three local Conservative MPs, stating that “their silence...is deafening” and none have “said a word about Kinder Morgan's plans to rip up the floor of their ridings”.

We know the Liberal leader backs Kinder Morgan's dangerous plan, and now we know Conservative MPs will also do anything

they can to ram through these pipelines, even against the wishes of their own constituents. British Columbians can only trust the NDP to represent their interests.

* * *

CONDOLENCES

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate reality of our world is that tragedies occur without warning. This past Sunday, a massive fire broke out on Ardglan Drive in Brampton, leaving almost 100 people homeless, and even more devastating, 10-year-old Nicolas Gabriel lost his life. The tragedy has left his family and the Brampton community heart-broken.

On behalf of myself, and I am sure all members of this chamber, I offer my sincere condolences and prayers to the Gabriel family in this time of unthinkable grief.

Bramptonians are kind, generous, and caring. The response from the Brampton community to this tragedy has been overwhelming. I want to particularly thank Ted Brown from Regeneration Outreach Community and Pastor Jamie from North Bramalea United Church, who have led the way in collecting donations, raising funds, and helping these families. This outpouring of assistance from Bramptonians is a beacon of hope in the face of this terrible tragedy.

* * *

[Translation]

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell you about a project called Les Ateliers du Carrefour, which is facing a difficult situation. It is waiting for a response to its skills link program application. The purpose of the project is to give two groups of about 10 young people aged 16 to 30 who are having problems a way to develop socioprofessional skills and abilities.

The project was supposed to be back up and running four months ago, but now it is on hold because the organization has not received confirmation from the government. This has been a major loss to the organization, which has had to let one of its employees go.

How much longer will the Conservative government and its minister make them wait? How much longer will they hinder the independence of young people in my riding?

* * *

[English]

VANESSA'S LAW

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-17, Vanessa's law, will help identify potentially dangerous drugs and ensure the quick recall of unsafe drugs. It contains tough new patient safety measures, and the health committee is currently working very well on amendments that will make this bill even stronger.

Oral Questions

I have been pleased to see the co-operation of all parties at committee to get its legislative study of Vanessa's law done today, and we hope to see it reported back to the House as soon as possible. If this spirit of co-operation continues, it is within our power to see Bill C-17 pass in this House before the summer.

Our discussions today have been fruitful, and I hope to see this goodwill continue to ensure that this important patient safety legislation becomes law as soon as possible. I am willing to work. Our committee is willing to work. Let us get the job done.

* * *

[Translation]

MUNICIPALITY OF CHAMPLAIN

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on August 8, 1664, when a seigneurie was awarded to soldier Étienne Pézard de la Touche, the village of Champlain, New France, was born.

One of the most beautiful villages of French America sits proudly on the banks of the St. Lawrence. Located on the Chemin du Roy, the municipality of Champlain has preserved a number of historical buildings. Champlain's charm is rooted not only in its built heritage, but also in the descendants from pioneers who kept the French language and culture alive in America.

Samuel de Champlain stopped there before the founding of Quebec, and his faith in New France and its inhabitants is stored there for generations to come.

The municipality of Champlain is celebrating its 350th anniversary and, as such, is a part of Canada's history.

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●(1415)

[English]

ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's north is a fundamental part of our national identity, and it is vital to our future. In fact, today a new atlas of the eastern Arctic was released. It documents hundreds of traditional Inuit place names and thousands of kilometres of routes through sea ice, along coastlines, and over land. Dozens of elders provided information on ancient trails through the Arctic that are still in use.

Inuit have occupied these areas for generations, and in fact they discovered the Northwest Passage even before we thought of it. This defines our understanding of Inuit culture and firms up a plank in Canada's case for sovereignty over the Northwest Passage. Canada's Arctic sovereignty is firmly anchored in history. It is proudly and strongly supported by the Inuit, who are known in Canada's culture as people of the sea and of the land.

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ETHICS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservative political operative Jean Yves Lortie has now revealed how, in 1993, he flew hundreds of delegates to Winnipeg using \$500,000 in cash from his infamous briefcase to help Brian

Mulroney take out Joe Clark, so no one should be surprised when Nigel Wright and other PMO operatives used wads of money to make this Prime Minister's problems go away. Apparently it is a time-honoured Conservative tradition, just like the Liberal tradition of dumping sponsorship cash into crooked firms during their time in the PMO. With such a sad record of payoffs, kickbacks, and backroom dirty tricks, it is no wonder the Liberals and the Conservatives are now joining forces to play judge, jury, and executioner to the NDP. It is the only kind of politics they know.

I hope we do not have to wait 80 years until they are wracked by guilty consciences to express regret for trying to turn this honourable chamber into a kangaroo court and for making a mockery out of any semblance of natural justice.

* * *

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the rules have always been clear: it is not acceptable to use House of Commons resources to fund party offices or political parties or to send party mail-outs, yet the NDP has been caught mailing over two million partisan flyers on the taxpayers' dime.

Yesterday the Board of Internal Economy ruled that the NDP spent \$1.17 million on illegal party propaganda.

Our government understands that the purpose of franking privileges is to support an open dialogue between members of Parliament and their constituencies, but this privilege is not to be abused.

Today the Minister of Transport personally called the CEO of Canada Post to discuss its plan to recover these misspent funds from the NDP. Rest assured, every single penny that was misspent by the NDP will be paid back to hard-working Canadian taxpayers. It is clear that the NDP broke the rules, and we expect it to repay Canadians immediately.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Conservatives' own expert review panel did not recommend the F-35 to replace the CF-18. It said that decision was to be left up to the Prime Minister and his cabinet. Let us have a clear answer, once and for all.

Is the Prime Minister going to hold an open, competitive bidding process to replace the CF-18?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the government is going to examine the expert report that it has commissioned and that it finds very helpful. The government will announce a decision that is in the best interests of the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Oral Questions

●(1420)

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the independent review panel assures Canadians that officials have given the Prime Minister an objective opinion on the choice of fighter jets, but the Prime Minister refuses to make that public.

Is that because the Conservatives heard something they did not want to hear? Why are they refusing to tell taxpayers whether they are going to hold an open, competitive bidding process to get the best plane at the best price?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government commissioned an independent expert report on the available options.

The government has received that report. It will review the options and make a decision that is in the best interests of the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

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*[English]***CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration got a little hung up on this question yesterday, so I would like to give the Prime Minister a chance to answer.

How many Syrian refugees have been brought into Canada?

[Translation]

How many Syrian refugees are on Canadian soil?

[English]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rather surprised these days to hear the leader of the NDP saying someone else got hung up on answering some questions.

I believe it is over 1,000. In the meantime, in terms of helping Syrian refugees or any of the activities the Government of Canada is involved in, the leader of the NDP should return the improper funds that his party took on mailings and offices and make sure we can do good things for Canadians and for people around the world.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that answer is still a little off.

[Translation]

How many of the 200 refugees that the government promised to sponsor have actually made it here to Canada?

Can the Prime Minister tell us that?

[English]

How many of the government-sponsored refugees that Canada promised to help have actually made it here to Canada? Can the Prime Minister tell us that?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I have answered the question.

Canada has been one of the biggest contributors to refugee assistance around the world. Once again, the real question that Canadians are asking is when the NDP is going to return the public money that it took completely illicitly to use on partisan mailings and partisan offices under the guise of parliamentary spending. The NDP knows, from top to bottom, that this was inappropriate, incorrect, and fraudulent. It should do the right thing and return the money.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us look at real generosity toward refugees. Lebanon, a country of 4.8 million people, has taken in over a million Syrian refugees. Turkey has taken in 800,000 refugees. Canada has promised to take in 200—not 200,000, but 200.

How many of the 200 refugees that the government said it would take in have actually made it to Canada? He still has not answered.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees have fled to neighbouring countries, where they are temporarily residing. I do not think it is an intention of those countries to resettle literally millions of Syrians in their countries. The Government of Canada will continue to assist Syrian refugees by bringing some to Canada and helping those who are sheltered around the world. I visited some in Jordan.

However, once again, none of this excuses the NDP from misusing public funds for partisan purposes.

* * *

●(1425)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the northern gateway pipeline and tanker project, the Conservatives are completely out of touch with British Columbians. They are out of touch with the communities and the indigenous people right across the province whose jobs and livelihoods would be ruined if there was an oil spill on B.C.'s coast. They have ignored local groups who have been warning about the impacts of the pipeline on B.C.'s sensitive ecosystems.

Will the government commit today to listen to British Columbians and finally reject this risky project?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the joint review panel has submitted its report to the government. Projects will only be approved if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment. We are carefully reviewing this report, and a response will be forthcoming.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the F-35 fiasco and the government's monumental incompetence. Why? Because it accepted the generals' decision in 2010 without questioning it, without taking into consideration costs, technical risks, industrial spinoffs and even the main mission of this aircraft, and without using a competitive bidding process. We are talking about tens of billions of dollars. Why is this government being so irresponsible with taxpayers' money?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of our seven-point plan, a panel of experts at arm's length from the government determined that the evaluation of the various options conducted by the Royal Canadian Air Force was both rigorous and impartial.

I would like to sincerely thank this panel for its service to Canada.

[English]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting for that public report. This has been a complete fiasco.

We all remember when the ex-minister of defence jumped into that F-35 mock-up like a kid. This was two weeks after he told us there would be a public, fair, open, and transparent competition. That was just a joke.

What about all those fantasy costs at the beginning? They have just exploded. Where are we today? We are no further ahead.

When is the government going to have a fair, open, and transparent competition to save Canadians money?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, we launched a seven-point plan to review all of the options available to replace the fleet of CF-18s, something that the Liberals never actually did.

As part of that, an independent panel reviewed the RCAF evaluation and had this to say about the process:

In the end, we are confident in saying that the evaluation process was conducted professionally, that it was not biased in favour of any of the four aircraft and that the resulting report to ministers by the RCAF evaluation team is therefore fair, objective, and impartial in all material respects.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday on *As it Happens*, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was unable to say how many of the 1,150 Syrian refugees who have received Canada's protection are in fact here in Canada. He promised to call back with the answer. Perhaps he knows the answer today. Can he tell us how many Syrian refugees are in Canada at this very moment? Are there more than 10, as the CBC announced in March?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all 1,150 Syrian refugees who have received Canada's protection so far are in Canada.

● (1430)

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, during an interview, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was trying to give the impression that his government is doing more than it promised.

We are going to welcome 4,000 Iraqi refugees by 2015, for a total of 20,000. We are going to welcome 1,000 refugees from Bhutan by 2015, for a total of 6,500. We can and should do more for Syrian refugees.

Why is the minister not capable of welcoming these 200 government-assisted Syrian refugees as promised and why can we not welcome even more?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number of Syrian refugees sponsored by the Government of Canada whose applications have been approved has already exceeded 200, and we are going to do more. We are asking all humanitarian organizations across the country, as well as private sponsors, mosques, churches and synagogues, to join us in showing Canada's generosity toward Syrian refugees.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this year, the United Nations has called on Canada to take in more Syrian refugees. Despite this request, the minister has not done anything and refuses to give an answer to the United Nations.

Does the minister refuse to respond to the UN because he is already unable to resettle the 200 refugees he promised to take in last year?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a result of the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, only 1,600 refugees have left the countries neighbouring Syria to settle in 16 countries. Canada is already playing an important role in this effort and we will do more.

That is why we have put a call out to private sponsors from across Canada and all the community organizations that have traditionally helped refugees. They are proud of Canada's tradition of receiving one in ten refugees worldwide.

[English]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's antics are just getting embarrassing. He has been unable to give clear answers time and again about Syrian refugees settling in Canada. This is not about under-protection or anything. He even hung up in the middle of a radio interview yesterday.

In March, only 10 refugees, which is not many out of the 200 they had promised to settle, were in Canada.

Oral Questions

This is a really simple question for this minister, and he cannot hang up this time. Exactly how many government-assisted sponsored refugees are now living in Canada?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the members opposite cannot accept answers in statistical form. There are 1,150 Syrian refugees in Canada, and we have approved more than 200 government-assisted refugees to come to Canada. What is not clear is whether the opposition is willing to work with us to get more private sponsors and to get more Canadian effort into the game to do more for the people of Syria.

Speaking of antics, why does the NDP not just pay back the \$1.17 million?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question is not how many have been approved, but how many—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. This is taking up a great deal of time. I would ask hon. members to come to order so that we do not miss out on other members' questions.

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta has the floor.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, the question is not about how many have been approved. The question is how many of them are now actually in Canada.

It is not just the refugee file the minister is bungling. He is also pushing forward legislation that tramples the constitutional rights of Canadians. We would think they had learned their lesson after seeing multiple bills overturned by the courts. Now the odds of this badly drafted bill being shot down by the courts are very high.

Can the minister tell us how revoking the citizenship of Canadians born in Canada will stand up to the scrutiny of the Supreme Court?

•(1435)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is incredible. The NDP talks down our record as a country on refugees. We resettle one in ten around the world. We have resettled close to 20,000 Iraqis, many of whom took refuge in Syria, and we are doing more. We are at the forefront of efforts to do more and to resettle Syrians.

On the citizenship act, the NDP cannot accept the fact that a dual national who is a terrorist, a spy against this country, or a traitor to this country should lose his or her citizenship. That is something that Canadian taxpayers and Canadian voters understand. They support us on this, just as they support us in asking the NDP to pay back \$1.17 million, which we could well use to meet the needs of Syrian refugees; it would go a long way.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister really will say anything to evade taking responsibility for his failures. He goes out into the media daily, where he only succeeds in making himself look even worse. The minister even went on TV and claimed that Bill C-24 would respect Canada's charter because it is consistent with other NATO countries.

Can the minister explain—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. This has taken up a great deal of time now. We will have to find that time from later on down the list.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River has the floor. Members on the government side may wish to answer the question, and they are free to do so if they are in cabinet. If they are not yet in cabinet, they should have confidence in their colleagues to answer the question and not try to answer for them.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, the minister went on TV and claimed that Bill C-24 would respect Canada's charter because it is consistent with other NATO countries.

Can the minister please explain how NATO has anything to do with charter protections for Canadian citizens?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite should know, NATO is the most successful military alliance in the history of the world. It is an alliance of democracies, all of whom take seriously the rule of law; and under the rule of law in Canada, terrorism, treason, and espionage are very serious crimes. That is why dual nationals should lose Canadian citizenship when they commit those crimes.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's antics may be entertaining for his friends, but he cannot drown out all of the critics of his bill. The Canadian Bar Association, Amnesty International, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, the Constitutional Rights Centre, and so many more are telling the minister that this bill does not work.

Why will he not acknowledge that removing Canadian citizenship for people born in Canada is clearly against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the member for Scarborough—Rouge River has been, but at an earlier stage of the discussion of these issues, my colleague, the member of Parliament for Calgary Northeast, did some public opinion research about how many Canadians support stripping dual nationals of citizenship for treason, terrorism, and espionage. It was 80-plus%, just under the number of Canadians who want the NDP to pay back the \$1.17 million.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians have dual citizenship. The minister is creating two classes of citizens with this bill. On one hand, there will be citizens who could have their citizenship arbitrarily revoked. On the other hand, there will be citizens for whom that is not the case.

Can the minister explain why Canadians such as I, who have dual citizenship, are going to be treated like second-class citizens?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP seems to agree that it is okay to revoke an individual's citizenship if it has been fraudulently obtained. They agree with that, but they do not agree that citizenship should be revoked for crimes as serious as treason, espionage, and terrorism. Every NATO country revokes citizenship for those crimes, except for maybe Portugal.

Why does the NDP not understand how common and necessary this is, and how inevitable it is that the House is going to pass this measure?

• (1440)

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister has refused to answer this question repeatedly. He refused to answer it today in question period. He refused last night on the radio.

The question is very simple, and we want a simple answer. How many of the 200 government-sponsored refugees that Canada promised to help have actually made it to Canada? How many? That is the number we want to have. That is the number Canadians want to have.

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition House leader proves, incontrovertibly, that he has no interest in relief for Syrian refugees and that he has no interest in our humanitarian effort over there.

Our question for him is this. How much of the \$1.17 million have the members of the opposition paid back to Canadian taxpayers as of today? How much of the \$1.17 million?

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration's degrading comments yesterday asserted that immigrants who—

Some members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Guelph has the floor, and I need to hear the question.

The hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration's degrading comments yesterday asserted that immigrants who arrived in Canada after 1977 are less loyal and less faithful to Canadian values.

In essence, he is saying immigrants from India, China, the Philippines, Europe, and the rest of the world, Canada's nation-builders, are a lower class of Canadian citizens.

We know the Prime Minister agrees with his minister's despicable position, but how many other Conservatives secretly harbour the

feeling that they are more Canadian than the new Canadians who arrived after 1977?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not at all what was said yesterday.

What I said yesterday was that Trudeau had cheapened Canadian citizenship by reducing the residency requirement, by opening the door to abuse, and by putting aside these fundamental issues of principle, of allegiance to Canada, of loyalty to Canada, and making absolutely no mention of them for the years after 1977.

We think it is important to punish those who commit terrorism, treason, or espionage against this country. We would also like to know how much of the \$40 million that party has not yet paid back has—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wascana.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister speaks far too recklessly about cheapened Canadian citizenship. He casts a slur across generations of newcomers since 1977, lumping them with traitors.

There is the cardiologist in Regina who came from Syria, the neurosurgeon from Nigeria, the university president from South Asia, the architect from the Philippines, and thousands more hard-working, tax-paying citizens. The minister must surely regret depicting these honest, loyal, decent Canadians as cheap. Are they not every bit as good as he is?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yes, they are. Absolutely, we are proud of every Canadian citizen.

What we are not proud of and what does not impress any Canadian is the fact that there are still thousands of cases of residency fraud being investigated by the RCMP, abuses of our citizenship program to which the Liberal Party of Canada turned an absolute blind eye. It did nothing over 13 years.

My colleague, the Minister of Employment and Social Development started the job, and we are finishing it with this bill.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration said that the 1977 act "actually cheapened Canadian citizenship."

My family and I arrived in Canada, like many other people, under the program opération mon pays during that period.

Does the minister think that my family and I are traitors and citizens of convenience?

• (1445)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the 1977 act cheapened citizenship for all of us as Canadian citizens.

We are proud of the stories of immigrants like the member opposite, the sacrifices they have made, the things they have done to make this a better country, and the contributions they have made.

Oral Questions

What we were not impressed with in the years after 1977 is the abuse that went unaddressed and the reduction in the residency requirement to three years, which was too little. That is why we are taking measures in this bill to restore the integrity and value of Canadian citizenship, and that is why it is popular with Canadians.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two months ago we heard shocking revelations about the extent of sexual assault in the military. The minister promised a review, but only dealing with policies and procedures. The internal review is now out, and it claims “There are no assessed gaps in policy”.

Every day five individuals in the Canadian military are victims of sexual assault. Could the minister explain how that can leave him satisfied with current policy?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, any allegations of sexual harassment in the armed forces are truly disturbing. This is why the Chief of the Defence Staff is conducting an external review, not the internal review that the hon. member just referred to. I look forward to that review, because this kind of behaviour is completely unacceptable.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps saying he takes this seriously, but he talks about sexual harassment, not sexual assault.

It has been two months since we have had these revelations, yet the military's internal review says no serious changes are needed. It hardly even mentions the subject of criminal sexual assault. What could be a better sign that an independent review is necessary?

Would the minister now agree that we need a truly independent inquiry, led by someone who is not hand-picked by the military brass and supported by independent counsel?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member has no confidence in the military leadership of this country. He missed the point again. An external review is being conducted for this unspeakable and unacceptable kind of behaviour. He should get onside with us. We are the ones who stand up for victims of sexual assault in this country. That is our record, and I am proud of that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, even though an estimated one-third of women in the Canadian Armed Forces have been sexually harassed, an internal report concluded that a significant overhaul is not necessary because, it says, harassment rates are falling and the existing administrative policies are just fine. Seriously.

When the senior ranks of the Canadian Forces continue to deny that the army has a sexual harassment problem, how are victims, citizens and military personnel supposed to believe that anything will be done to address the situation?

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the senior ranks are not denying the problem.

As I pointed out to the member's colleague, an external review is being conducted on the orders of the Chief of the Defence Staff. We look forward to that report, because this is a priority for this government and for the military.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is making a mistake by asking the Canadian Forces to investigate their own problems. I do not understand what he does not get about this issue.

The internal report clearly shows that the senior ranks are downplaying the sexual harassment problem. They are more interested in managing their own image than in finding solutions. Contrary to their claims, harassment in the army is a serious and widespread problem that demands a comprehensive independent inquiry.

How can the minister suggest that the recently announced review will be independent, considering that the senior ranks will choose who is going to be in charge of it?

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is not listening to what has taken place. There was an internal review, as I indicated, but the Chief of the Defence Staff is conducting an external independent review of these serious charges. The member should pay attention to that.

* * *

● (1450)

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their parliamentarians and political parties to follow the rules. Yesterday the Board of Internal Economy ruled that the NDP broke House of Commons rules by using parliamentary resources for partisan mail-outs.

Could the Minister of Transport tell the House how the government will ensure that the NDP pays back the \$1.3 million it misspent and that it owes Canada Post?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chair of the transport committee for this important question.

It is true that the rules have been very clear. It is not acceptable to use House of Commons resources to fund a party office or to send out party mail-outs. The NDP knows this. As a result, I expect that the party is going to pay back Canada Post.

However, I also expect that those members will refuse to pay back Canada Post, and that is why today I spoke to the CEO of Canada Post to ensure that he understood what was happening. He does. He takes it very seriously. Canada Post will be developing a plan to deal with the situation.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it took the Minister of Transport six months to respond to a Government of Quebec request about creating a no-fly zone over provincial prisons. Six months. The reply did not even cover action to be taken. Not at all. It was a letter asking the Government of Quebec a series of additional questions.

Does the minister find it acceptable for helicopters to be able to land so easily in the yards of detention centres? When will she pick up the phone to resolve the situation once and for all?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I had the opportunity to speak to Minister Thériault today about how we can improve penitentiary security. I can assure her that action is being taken with respect to federal penitentiaries.

As for what happened at the provincial prison in Quebec City, we are offering our assistance to the Quebec government. It is important to recognize that a no-fly zone is a limited method that criminals can disregard to get what they want. However, we will continue to work with the Government of Quebec.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question was for the Minister of Transport, because the last time I checked, she was responsible for airspace.

Imposing a temporary no-fly zone over the Orsainville prison is unacceptable. The federal government imposed a temporary no-fly zone over the Orsainville prison minutes after the prison break. That is good, but it is temporary.

Why did the government not do this sooner? Why is this measure only temporary? Why not have a no-fly zone over all the provincial prisons in Quebec? How many Interpol alerts will it take for the government to do something?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have answered that question. If the previous separatist government was in such a hurry to do something about this, then why did it wait seven months to send a letter to the Canadian government?

That being said, we will continue to work closely with the current government. However, we have to realize that an imaginary line is not necessarily going to keep seasoned criminals from breaking the law. We will continue to enforce the law and track down criminals.

If the hon. member or anyone else has any information, they should notify the police.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives keep promising they will not approve an unsafe pipeline like the northern gateway, but yesterday the minister was in New York, promising a room full of oil executives that he would push through an oil pipeline to the west coast.

Canadians are used to B.C. Conservatives talking out of both sides of their mouths, delays in New York, and full steam ahead when they are in Ottawa. However, the government has to make a real choice, and make a choice soon, between the narrow interests of oil lobbyists and the interests of British Columbians and the safety of our coastal communities. That choice is clear.

Will the government just reject the northern gateway pipeline proposal?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the joint review panel report has been submitted to the government. Projects will only be approved if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment. We are carefully reviewing this report and a decision will be forthcoming.

Speaking of decisions, when will the NDP decide to pay back the \$1.17 million it bilked Canadian taxpayers of for its illegal mail-outs?

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, delaying a decision will not make this bad project any better. Apparently there are 21 Conservative MPs from British Columbia, but we would not know it from their deafening silence on Enbridge northern gateway. This raw bitumen pipeline is opposed by over 130 first nations, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and two-thirds of all British Columbians.

If my Conservative colleagues do not care about B.C.'s west coast and do not care about B.C.'s economy, maybe they care enough to protect their own political backsides. Will they finally stand up to the oil lobby, stand up to the Prime Minister, and finally stand up for British Columbia and say “no” to Enbridge northern gateway?

● (1455)

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is thoroughly reviewing the joint panel report prior to making a decision on this project. We are proud of the action we have taken to ensure Canada has a world-class regulatory framework and a means for the safest form of transportation for our energy products. We have been clear that projects will only proceed if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the minister is able to pick up her phone and call Canada Post to find out about the NDP's bad spending, why was this government not able to pick up the phone and give an answer to the Quebec minister who asked for no-fly zones on October 24 of last year and to address the issue that same day? Why did it take the government six months to decide? In the meantime, people have escaped. Six months of waiting and doing nothing, how does that make sense?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I picked up the phone this morning, I can assure my colleague. Our exchange was very good, because the government in Quebec City is concerned about public safety and is proud that Quebec is part of Canada. I am sure that my colleague will agree with me. The Quebec government is a government like ours that is committed to keeping criminals behind bars, and that is what we will continue to do.

* * *

[English]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was recently announced that a very important rail service in Cape Breton may be discontinued. The Minister of Transport has been involved in rail issues elsewhere in Canada. Will the minister work with the Nova Scotia government to save this vital rail service in Cape Breton?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too have heard about the issue with respect to what is happening in terms of Cape Breton and this line. The rail line in question is a provincial line, and we will hear from our partners on the issue.

In the meantime, we will continue to work with the mayor of Cape Breton, Cecil Clarke, on these matters and with the provincial government as well.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to Reuters, the Minister of Agriculture has single-handedly launched a trade war against the United States by calling the country a schoolyard bully. The minister tends to see enemies everywhere, particularly when his own negligence is involved, as in the listeriosis and E. coli crises and the grain transportation fiasco.

Rather than insulting our main trading partner, why does the minister not seek to improve the living conditions of our farmers?

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would know that Canada is a large agricultural trading nation, the third largest in the world. We rely on multilateral and bilateral trade agreements. We want to see them successful.

We are a very strategic partner in the movement forward on the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We continue to make arguments on behalf of Canadian agriculture, as well as all the industries that will be affected. We will never sign an agreement that is not in the best interest of the Canadian economy.

However, at the same time, what I am getting phone calls from farmers about right now is when the NDP is going to pay back all the money it has ripped off from Canadian taxpayers.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how can anybody believe the minister's claim of standing up for farmers? Even by his own measure, he is failing them: CETA is in limbo, and the grain transport crisis cost farmers billions of dollars. Now he is turning an agricultural trade dispute with the U.S. into name-calling and finger-pointing, calling the Americans schoolyard bullies. He just loses credibility, and farmers are actually paying for it.

Beyond juvenile outbursts, what is the minister doing to actually improve this agricultural trade crisis, and where is his plan?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since NAFTA put some rules in place, we work with the Americans on the WTO, we work with them on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and we also have other trade agreements that involve the Americans as we pass through merchandise to Mexico. It is always incumbent on us to ensure that those trade routes stay open. There will be disputes, but we continue to work with our partners in the U.S.

I was at a trilateral meeting in Mexico just a couple of weeks ago, where I and the Secretary of Agriculture for the U.S. and the Secretary of Agriculture for Mexico started hammering out some of these deals.

We continue to work on behalf of Canadian agriculture. I wish the NDP would do the same.

* * *

● (1500)

JUSTICE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court's ruling in Bedford gave clear guidance to Parliament. It struck down Criminal Code provisions it believed threatened the safety and security of those who found themselves caught in prostitution. In response, the Minister of Justice has tabled the protection of communities and exploited persons act.

The bill recognizes that prostitution hurts Canadian communities, the most vulnerable, and that the majority of the women who find themselves in this activity are victims seeking an exit. To combat these harms, the bill seeks to criminalize those who exploit women.

Could the minister inform the House as to why he took this approach?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Kildonan—St. Paul for her exceptional hard work in support of vulnerable persons.

Oral Questions

Our government's approach represents a comprehensive made-in-Canada model that reflects Canadian values. The bill would crack down on those predators, pimps, and johns who fuel the demand for this inherently dangerous activity, while protecting our communities. It would also provide for an exit strategy for victims.

We had heard today from courageous women who talked about the exploitation and victimization they had experienced. They saw merit in Bill C-36 and wished it had been in place for them.

It is a sensible, practical, principled approach that should get support from all members.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a record number of people are leaving Prince Edward Island due to the Conservative cuts and changes to EI. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans claims everyone is leaving for a better life, when in fact there is no better place to live in Canada, in the world, than Prince Edward Island.

This record out-migration means there is no one left to work in the island's fish plants. The price for fish is low, and fishermen are not able to get their products to market.

I would like the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to explain to the House and the people involved in the fisheries what measures she will take to help this industry. It needs help.

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has done more than any other government in history for the fishermen.

We have invested in the lobster industry. We have invested in rationalization. We have invested in trade deals that will significantly improve the price for the fishermen at the wharf.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, flight attendants are concerned about the Conservatives' decision to reduce the minimum number of flight attendants required on domestic flights. This decision could affect the safety of passengers since it reduces the number of people available to help them. We have seen the impact that relaxing the rules has had in the railway industry.

The main union for flight attendants has requested a meeting with the minister to discuss the situation. Will she agree to that request?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carriers from the U.S. and Europe utilize the same standard every day as they fly through our airspace. As a result, there has been a request for a regulation change for a new process. In fact, on May 22, we had a full public consultation on this matter, and I have received a letter from the CUPE president.

In truth, because CUPE is currently suing Transport Canada, it would be inappropriate to meet.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, federal scientists have advised that already threatened woodland caribou in northern Alberta may vanish completely if more habitat is lost.

The courts already ruled that the government broke the law by refusing to consider aboriginal treaty rights in deciding not to protect the caribou, and Conservatives sit on their hands while Alberta keeps leasing out these lands for oil sands extraction.

The government claims, even today, that it only supports development that will not harm the environment. Therefore, why is it failing to protect the caribou?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to protecting our environment. That is why we recently launched the new national conservation plan that will enable Canadians to conserve and restore lands and waters. It will enhance the connections between citizens and natural spaces.

We have also created two national marine conservation areas, three marine protected areas, three national wildlife areas, two national parks, and one historic site. The total area of lands we have protected is an area twice the size of Vancouver Island. We are very proud of that.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, I personally witnessed the magnitude of the humanitarian tragedy caused by the presence of more than one million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In northern Lebanon, I saw improvised camps and many children by the roadside, in the suffocating heat and dust, selling the little they have in order to survive.

In July 2013, Canada promised to accept 1,300 Syrian refugees.

As of today, what is the exact number of Syrian refugees who have arrived in Canada?

● (1505)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm, once again, that 1,150 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada.

We are also proud to confirm that we intend to accept more. Not long ago, we were proud to welcome, here in Canada, UN High Commissioner Guterres for a long visit. He told us about his organization's plans. We will continue to work with the United Nations and other partners.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the third reading stage of Bill C-31.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: The question is on the amendment.

• (1510)

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

(Division No. 206)

YEAS

Members

Andrews	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélangier	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brison	Brosseau
Caron	Casey
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Goodale	Grogoué
Harris (St. John's East)	Jacob
Jones	Julian
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	May
McGuinty	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	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Pilon	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Rousseau	Saganash
Scarpaleggia	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Toone
Turmel	Valeriote— 94

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	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
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukowski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Poillievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trotter
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
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 — 147	

PAIRED

Nil

Government Orders

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main 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:

• (1520)

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

*(Division No. 207)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	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
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller

Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	Norlock
Moore (Fundy Royal)	O'Connor
Nicholson	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Paradis
Oliver	Poilievre
Opitz	Raït
Payne	Rathgeber
Preston	Rempel
Rajotte	Rickford
Reid	Saxton
Richards	Seeback
Ritz	Shiple
Schellenberger	Smith
Shea	Sorenson
Shory	Strahl
Sopuck	Tilson
Storseth	Trost
Sweet	Truppe
Toet	Valcourt
Trottier	Van Loan
Uppal	Warawa
Van Kesteren	Watson
Vellacott	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Warkentin	Weston (Saint John)
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Wilks
Weston (Saint John)	Williamson
Wilks	Woodworth
Wong	Young (Oakville)
Yelich	Zimmer— 148
Young (Vancouver South)	

NAYS

Members

Andrews	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélangier	Benskin
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Caron	Casey
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Goodale	Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)	Jacob
Jones	Julian
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	May
McGuinty	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	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Pilon	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Rousseau	Saganash
Scarpaleggia	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Toone
Turmel	Valeriote— 94

Business of the House

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Before the Thursday question, I think the hon. Minister of International Trade is rising on a point of order.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CANADA-KOREA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the text of the Canada-Korea Free Trade Agreement.

As members know, this agreement will boost Canada's economy by \$1.7 billion and increase Canadian exports to Korea by 32%, creating tens of thousands of jobs for Canadians.

The Speaker: It being Thursday, the hon. opposition House leader will likely ask the Thursday question, so I will give him the floor now, and ask him to keep in mind the point of order raised by the member for Halifax West last week about the scope of the Thursday question.

The hon. opposition House leader.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I wanted to discuss with you. In last week's *Hansard*, two minutes were dedicated to questions, and that is a part of the principle of the Thursday question. However—

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. I need to cut off the hon. member. I am getting indications that the interpretation may not be working.

The hon. opposition House leader.

• (1525)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I hope that all of this time does not count for my Thursday question. It will be the longest Thursday question in history.

[Translation]

Last week, there was a half-page of questions and five pages of answers. The principle is sort of like that for a committee of the whole. We ask questions and the government has a little more time to answer them. However, it does not extend to four or five pages of answers.

I have two figures for this week. First, the number 93 represents the number of shifts missed by the Conservatives since we began night shifts. Ninety-three. It is appalling when you think about all the nurses, construction workers and servers who show up for their shift to do their job.

[English]

The other figure I would like to mention is the number of rejected bills. Of course, the government House leader said last week that we have to churn those widgets out and then we can take a break. However, the reality is that quality control is the most important aspect. Having worked in factories and having worked as a manual labourer—I am very proud of my background and my family's background—I know that quality control is exceedingly important.

The problem is that the government, over the last year or two, has had the poorest record of product recall in Canadian parliamentary history. It has had more bills rejected by the courts, and it has had to reintroduce legislation to fix the problems in previous legislation that it has introduced. The government has a problem with quality control, and that is why we are proud, as NDP members in the House, to contribute to that quality control by offering more amendments than has any other opposition in parliamentary history to fix the mistakes the Conservatives have made.

My Thursday question is very simple. In the seven days that we have available to us until next Friday, June 20, what steps is the government going to take to bring that quality control under control and to work with the opposition so that it does not have any more badly botched bills or bills that are rejected by the courts and so that it does not have to introduce legislation to fix the problems with the existing bills? Will the government actually work with the opposition over the seven days remaining to us?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have another opportunity to respond to the Thursday question from the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

I know how proud he claims to be about showing up to work. In fact, though, the New Democrats seem to have a spotty record on that. Last evening, that very member rose to speak to our government's bill to protect our communities and exploited persons—that is Bill C-36—and after one whole minute he moved to adjourn the House. He said we should all go home. Maybe that is the parliamentary equivalent of taking one's ball and wanting to go home when one is unhappy with how things are going in another meeting.

In any event, we did all dutifully troop into the House to vote on that at 6 p.m. However, what was very revealing was that only 61 of those 98 New Democrats stood in their places to vote. A few of them were missing their shifts, oddly. We did not find that on the Conservative side. In fact, we just had two votes in the House, and the number of New Democrats who were not standing in their places was very similar to that.

Therefore, when I ask myself who is not showing up for work, I can say it is not the Conservatives not showing up; it is, in fact, the New Democrats.

However, following the popular acclaim of last week's Thursday statement, I would like to recap what we have actually accomplished in the House since last week in terms of the legislative agenda.

Bill C-37, the riding name change act, 2014, which was compiled and assembled through the input of all parties, was introduced and adopted at all stages.

Business of the House

Bill C-31, the economic action plan, act no. 1, was adopted at both report stage and, just moments ago, at third reading.

Bill C-24, the strengthening Canadian citizenship act, was concurred in at report stage.

Bill C-20, the Canada-Honduras economic growth and prosperity act, was passed at third reading. Of course, the NDP tried to slow down its passage, but Conservatives were able to get around those efforts, as I am sure the 50 New Democrats on vigil in the House last night fondly appreciate, and we were able to extend our hours because there were, again, not even 50 New Democrats here in the House to stand in their places to block that debate as they wanted to, so we did finish the Canada-Honduras bill that night and were able to vote on it.

The government's spending proposals for the year were adopted by the House, and two bills to give these plans effect, Bill C-38 and Bill C-39, were each passed at all stages.

Bill C-22, the energy safety and security act, was reported back from committee, and several other reports from committees were also tabled. As I understand, we will see Bill C-17, the protecting Canadians from unsafe drugs act, reported back from the health committee in short order.

Finally, this morning we virtually unanimously passed a motion to reappoint Mary Dawson as our Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Sadly, though, the New Democrats did not heed my call last week to let Bill C-32, the victims bill of rights act, pass at second reading. We were treated, sadly, to only more words and no deeds from the NDP.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Turning to the business ahead, I am currently anticipating the following debates. This afternoon and tonight, we will finish the debate on Bill C-36, the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act, at second reading. That will be followed by third reading of Bill C-24 and second reading of Bill C-35, Justice for Animals in Service Act (Quanto's Law).

Tomorrow morning, we will debate Bill C-24, if necessary, and Bill C-18, Agricultural Growth Act, at second reading. After question period, we will get back to Bill C-32, and give the NDP one more chance to send the victims bill of rights to committee.

The highlight of Monday is going to be the report stage of Bill C-6, the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act. Tuesday's feature debate will be Bill C-2, the Respect for Communities Act, at second reading. Wednesday will see us finish third reading, I hope, of Bill C-6. During the additional time available those days—in addition to Thursday and Friday of next week—I will schedule any unfinished debates on Bill C-18, Bill C-32 and Bill C-35.

I will also try to schedule debates on Bill C-22 and Bill C-17, as well as other bills, such as Bill C-3, Safeguarding Canada's Seas and Skies Act, at third reading; Bill C-8, Combating Counterfeit Products Act, at third reading; Bill C-12, Drug-Free Prisons Act, at second reading; Bill C-21, Red Tape Reduction Act, at second

reading; Bill C-26, Tougher Penalties for Child Predators Act, at second reading; Bill S-2, Incorporation by Reference in Regulations Act, at second reading; Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act, at second reading; and Bill S-4, Digital Privacy Act—which I understand we will receive shortly from the other place—at second reading.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order based on the whole concept of the standing order that deals with the Thursday question.

We request that you, in your capacity as the Speaker, review the last several Thursday questions that have been put forward by the House leader of the official opposition and the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

The concern is that we are going far beyond what has been the traditional type of questions and answers on Thursday. There is a great deal of commentary that is also being added to it. If this were to continue, we in the Liberal Party would like to participate in that process, because like other political parties, we are also very opinionated on issues that come before us. We would love to be able to, for example, talk about issues of the temporary foreign workers or the mailings and satellite offices. There is no shortage of issues in which we could become engaged.

What we are suggesting is that, suffice it to say, we would like to maintain the tradition of Thursday questions, and that they be, as much as possible, concise and to the point. If they do get somewhat long-winded and more political, then we would ask that the Liberals also be given consideration to express our thoughts on the past week and the week ahead. We would love the opportunity and, personally, I would love the opportunity to provide some reflections on my Conservative colleagues and my New Democratic colleagues.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I cannot resist the temptation to rise and respond to the suggestion from the hon. member for Winnipeg North that indeed he will be brief and to the point. That is, of course, his well-established practice in this House.

The member wishes to seek an opportunity to participate. I personally see no problem with the nature of the questions my friend asks and the responses I give, of course, in setting out our agenda and making it clear to Canadians some of the contrast that exists there and some of the motivations behind why the government is doing what it is doing and why we are pursuing the important legislation we are.

I think it makes sense when I explain what bills we are pursuing, what those bills do, and what they are.

My friend did not have a similar position when the Liberals were not the third party. Their position comes as a result of being the third party. I do note, in general, as he did speak to a certain extent personally, that he has not suffered from a lack of opportunity to speak in this House. I am sure he will have many more opportunities to allow his views to be heard here.

Government Orders

●(1535)

The Speaker: I appreciate the hon. member for Winnipeg North raising this point, as his colleague from Halifax West did last week.

I have had the opportunity to look at the scope of previous Thursday questions from previous years in previous Parliaments, and it does seem to the Chair that the length of time that the question takes up has certainly expanded.

I do ask members, the House leader of the official opposition, and the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons to keep in mind the principle behind the Thursday question, which is to inform the House of the upcoming business.

There are other opportunities to debate aspects of the current legislation in terms of the timing of it. Especially as we get into these late days in June, it might be well for them to remember the purpose of the Thursday question and not to have an extension of question period or other types of debate.

I do ask them to keep that in mind. I think the House would appreciate a return to the more specific scope of the original Thursday questions.

* * *

[*Translation*]**MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE**

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that it has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bills-5, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve of Canada).

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, this bill might also have been added to the list of things we could deal with in the week and a half ahead, had it been read by you before my Thursday answer.

The Speaker: I literally just got it. We will move on now.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS[*Translation*]**PROTECTION OF COMMUNITIES AND EXPLOITED PERSONS ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Criminal Code in response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Attorney General of Canada v. Bedford and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always a little irritating for those who are watching us and were here for the first part, but not the second part, or vice versa.

I was explaining that this government has aborted this, so to speak, in the sense that the Conservatives have not mentioned the Bedford decision much. They quoted one line from the decision to justify their Bill C-36.

It is important for hon. members in the House to clearly understand what the Supreme Court of Canada said about the three sections in question, those challenged by the claimants and the respondents/appellants on cross-appeal. According to the Supreme Court:

The impugned laws negatively impact security of the person rights of prostitutes and thus engage s. 7...The prohibitions all heighten the risks the applicants face in prostitution—itsself a legal activity.

Earlier, I heard one of my colleagues in the House say that she was very pleased to hear that prostitution is now illegal. However, Bill C-36 does not go that far. With all due respect to the Conservatives and some other members, the bill before us does not make prostitution illegal.

The Conservatives left a few little loopholes because they know that this bill may also be a problem. It would be interesting to debate the issue of whether prostitution can be made completely illegal in Canada. I am going to do as the courts and judges would do: I am going to reserve judgment because the question is not before the court. The Supreme Court ruling goes on to say:

They do not merely impose conditions on how prostitutes operate. They go a critical step further, by imposing dangerous conditions on prostitution; they prevent people engaged in a risky—but legal—activity from taking steps to protect themselves from the risks. That causal connection is not negated by the actions of third-party johns and pimps, or prostitutes' so-called choice to engage in prostitution. While some prostitutes may fit the description of persons who freely choose (or at one time chose) to engage in the risky economic activity of prostitution, many prostitutes have no meaningful choice but to do so. Moreover, it makes no difference that the conduct of pimps and johns is the immediate source of the harms suffered by prostitutes. The violence of a john does not diminish the role of the state in making a prostitute more vulnerable to that violence.

...compare the rights infringement caused by the law with the objective of the law, not with the law's effectiveness. That is, they do not look to how well the law achieves its object, or to how much of the population the law benefits [or harms]. The analysis is qualitative, not quantitative. The question under s. 7 is whether anyone's life, liberty or security of the person has been denied by a law that is inherently bad [that is the heart of the matter]; a grossly disproportionate, overbroad, or arbitrary effect on one person is sufficient to establish a breach of s. 7. [The test is stringent.]

...the negative impact of the bawdy-house prohibition (s. 210) on the applicants' security of the person is grossly disproportionate to its objective of preventing public nuisance. The harms to prostitutes identified by the courts below, such as being prevented from working in safer fixed indoor locations and from resorting to safe houses, are grossly disproportionate to the deterrence of community disruption. Parliament has the power to regulate against nuisances, but not at the cost of the health, safety and lives of prostitutes. Second, the purpose of the living on the avails of prostitution prohibition in s. 212(1)(j) is to target pimps and the parasitic, exploitative conduct in which they engage. The law, however, punishes everyone who lives on the avails of prostitution without distinguishing between those who exploit prostitutes and those who could increase the safety and security of prostitutes, for example, legitimate drivers, managers, or bodyguards.

●(1540)

I was a little worried by some remarks I heard on panels I participated in. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice in particular suggested that, at any rate, a brothel, even though it is kept by people who are consenting, is not a place we want to see, that it is a nuisance and a form of exploitation. That is not quite what the Supreme Court tells us.

Government Orders

It also includes anyone involved in business with a prostitute, such as accountants or receptionists. In these ways, the law includes *some* conduct that bears no relation to its purpose of preventing the exploitation of prostitutes. The living on the avails provision is consequently overbroad. Third, the purpose of the communicating prohibition...is not to eliminate street prostitution for its own sake, but to take prostitution off the streets and out of public view in order to prevent the nuisances that street prostitution can cause. The provision's negative impact on the safety and lives of street prostitutes, who are prevented by the communicating prohibition from screening potential clients for intoxication and propensity to violence, is a grossly disproportionate response to the possibility of nuisance caused by street prostitution.

I have often heard that from sex workers. They told us how important it is for them to communicate. As strange as it may seem for those who are not part of that industry and have never even gone anywhere near it, it is important for those women to be able to have a kind of reference system. In some places, they talk to each other in order to make sure that they are not putting their lives in danger.

The law is therefore not minimally impairing. Nor, at the final stage of the s. 1 inquiry, is the law's effect of preventing prostitutes from taking measures that would increase their safety, and possibly save their lives, outweighed by the law's positive effect of protecting prostitutes from exploitative relationships. The impugned laws are not saved by s. 1.

Allow me to quote the Supreme Court's most important conclusion. The government always likes to read this sentence and this sentence only: "It will be for Parliament, should it choose to do so, to devise a new approach...". Sometimes, it says the rest of the sentence very quickly: "...reflecting different elements of the existing regime".

In fact, however, the paragraph reads as follows:

Concluding that each of the challenged provisions violates the *Charter* does not mean that Parliament is precluded from imposing limits on where and how prostitution may be conducted, as long as...

This is the most fundamental point. The Supreme Court of Canada has not told the government that the Minister of Justice can do whatever he likes and that as long as he comes up with something different from what is in the current Criminal Code, it will be fine, that is his perfect right. That is not what the Supreme Court said. It says that it is not precluding the government from imposing limits on where and how prostitution may be conducted, as long as it does so in a way that does not infringe the constitutional rights of prostitutes.

As a result, since setting limits on prostitution is a complex and delicate subject, it is up to Parliament to act, should it choose to do so. That is the door that the Supreme Court has left wide open for Parliament. The Criminal Code already includes provisions prohibiting the exploitation of minors. We are going to hear a lot of talk about that from the Conservative benches, since they will want to prohibit that. However, it is already in the Criminal Code. Given that human trafficking is prohibited by the Criminal Code and that it has been recently improved with the bill that my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul introduced, we can refine it all.

The Supreme Court did not necessarily require the government to introduce something in the coming year. However, if it did not do anything, the three sections deemed unconstitutional would die a natural death because they put the health and safety of sex workers in danger.

What did the government do? It took a hammer and started hammering at random, saying that it would make a few changes so that everyone would think it was solving the problem with prostitution. I would have liked to at least feel that the Conservatives

took this seriously when the minister talked about \$20 million during his press conference.

• (1545)

I remember the discussions I have had with people from the Women's Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution. They told me how important it was. I want to quote Kim Pate, who is a member of the coalition:

Decriminalizing the women and holding accountable the men who buy and sell women and girls means nothing if women's economic, racial and social inequality is not addressed.

The Conservatives are still criminalizing prostitutes and investing a measly \$20 million. It is ridiculous.

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the most creative speech I have heard on the subject for a very long time. I realize that in 2004 the member opposite was a Liberal and then decided to be an NDP candidate in 2006. She does not keep up with the NDP policy. For instance, the NDP premier and the NDP justice minister in Manitoba have highly endorsed everything. The justice minister asked for criminalizing the purchasers of sex, continuing to criminalize the activities of those who prey upon the victims, and providing meaningful support to the victims. That is everything that we have in Bill C-36.

When I listened to the speech, it brought back to memory Mrs. Emerson from Gatineau. She trafficked three girls and got seven years for doing that. There are a lot of people in the member's area who strongly support Bill C-36. Today, there are a lot of people listening. What about the members of her caucus? I know some of the members of her caucus fully support this bill. Could you talk to me about the challenges that you have in your caucus—

• (1550)

The Speaker: Order, please. I do have to remind the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul not to use the second person, but the third person, and to go through the Chair.

The hon. member for Gatineau.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I appreciate that she opened the door for me to talk about Manitoba's justice minister. She said that my speech was creative, but she should be addressing her compliments to the Supreme Court, since my speech focused on the ruling and I quoted some important passages. She is therefore calling a speech based on the Supreme Court ruling creative, but it was essentially just copying.

I found it rather strange to see a letter from my colleague that said:

[English]

“support from Manitoba government”.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

It is funny, because I have had conversations about this. In fact, the minister of justice of Manitoba sent a letter on February 5, but it is now June 12. The member tables a letter that states, “We, in Manitoba, support the Nordic model.” When I asked questions this morning, they made a point of saying that it was not a Nordic model, but a made-in-Canada model.

Moreover, I look forward to hearing from Minister Swan of the New Democratic Party of Manitoba. I will let him scoop himself on Bill C-36 because he very clearly said that under no circumstances should prostitutes be criminalized and that ways to get them out of prostitution need to be provided for.

Two things he asked for are not there. I will not say how I would describe using his letter to make members of the House believe things, because I have too much respect for the member.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague on the justice committee for her speech and for reminding us that this all arose out of the Bedford decision and for reading back to us the portions of the Bedford decision to refocus the discussion.

She indicated in her speech that she has heard from advocates for decriminalization and has heard from advocates for the Nordic model. I am sure she would agree that what we have before us is neither. The made-in-Canada amendments bring what may have been a Nordic model starting point much closer to a made-in-Moscow bill.

Could the hon. member comment on the made-in-Canada sledgehammer that has been added to the Nordic model, and why that offends what the Supreme Court of Canada had to say?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I will respond along the same lines. I am pleased because it gives me an opportunity to say a little more. A 20-minute speech is not long, especially for me. Therefore, the 10-minute question period allows me to expand on what I said.

I agree with him that we are not talking about one approach versus another. After reading Bill C-36, all the groups I met with agree that we need to get women out of drug addiction and poverty, which they do not always get into by choice. Sometimes they cannot help it. That is what we should work on.

All the Canadian groups that I heard agree that the government has really taken the worst route. The official opposition is not alone here. From what I have read, it seems that things did not go well within the Conservative caucus because they also have different opinions.

We have to stop all the posturing and focus on the real problem: the safety of sex workers. That is the message of the Bedford decision. At the same time, we have to work to get women out of poverty. If anyone can tell me with a straight face that he thinks the Conservative government's mission is to get women out of poverty, you will be able to knock me over with a feather.

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-36 clearly leads to confusion. The Supreme Court was asking

that the Criminal Code not make the practice of prostitution more dangerous. It never asked for moral approval of prostitution. I have read the Supreme Court judgment, and it does not ask for moral approval. That is where the confusion lies. This legislation seeks to prohibit the world of prostitution because that is the only way the Conservatives have found to prevent women from being in danger in that world.

The question I want to ask my colleague is relatively simple. Do we really think that the Criminal Code alone is a solution that will put an end to the problem of prostitution?

• (1555)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

Anyone with an interest in the matter knows that the answer is no. First, I do not know a lot of abusers who sit down to read the Criminal Code in order to find the penalty to which they are liable. If that were the case, there would be a lot less crime in the world.

We have to focus on what drives people in that direction. Having met groups like Maggie's, Stella and the Pivot Legal Society, I know that some people make this a career choice. Perhaps there will be no agreement on the exact number, but they exist. It is not up to me to tell people what they should do with their lives. However, I want to avoid exploitation and I want to make sure that people who are in the industry run as few risks as possible for their health, their lives and their safety, as the Bedford decision intends.

That is why I find it inconceivable that the government is only investing \$20 million. Even though the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul says it is just a first step, the government still needs to demonstrate that it is taking this seriously. That kind of investment clearly shows the government's true intentions. If you look at the bill's preamble and then look at this \$20 million, you know exactly what the government is trying to do with prostitution. That is unfortunate.

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the Bedford decision. She will know that all of the appellants in the Bedford decision said that when they were out on the street, they were beaten up. When they were allowed to carry on the trade inside where they could screen clients and have security, they were much safer.

I wonder if the member heard from Katarina MacLeod, who spoke earlier today at a press conference and described being in sex work for 15 years on the streets. She talked about how she was beaten constantly. She said there is no safe location for prostitution. She also mentioned section 15, which talks about circumstances in which there might be children present. It is a good idea not to communicate for the purposes of prostitution in front of children and not actually do sexual services in front of children.

I wonder if the member could tell us why she thinks balancing the protection of children in our communities is a bad thing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I will try to respond quickly.

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I hope to study clause 15 more closely than the government has. The minister and the parliamentary secretary are not saying the same thing. It does not bode well for a bill when the justice minister and his parliamentary secretary interpret it differently.

There is also serious danger associated with the inability to advertise services via a third party. People are wondering if they will be prosecuted if information they post on their website goes through an Internet service provider.

If that is the case, what will they do? Will they have to beat their drums or send out smoke signals to advertise their services? That is what will drive them underground and put their lives in danger. That is the main problem.

• (1600)

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will get to that member's point about advertising in just a moment. She has it exactly wrong, as a number of commentators have. I will be happy to explain it to her. I hope she sticks around for my speech.

I am pleased to rise in support of Bill C-36, the protection of communities and exploited persons act. This legislation represents the government's response to the Supreme Court of Canada December 2013 Bedford decision.

Before discussing the measures proposed by Bill C-36, it is important to examine the Bedford decision, which has informed Bill C-36 proposals for law reform.

The NDP justice critic mentioned a few moments ago that we had not talked that much about the Bedford decision in relation to our bill, so I am going to do that right now. I hope she has a chance to stay and listen to my speech.

Under the current law, neither the purchase nor sale of sexual services is illegal. Instead, existing criminal offences prohibit activities related to prostitution. In Bedford, the Supreme Court of Canada found three of these offences unconstitutional: first, the bawdy house offence with respect to the practice of prostitution under section 210; second, the living off the avails of prostitution offence, which is paragraph 212(1)(j) and third, the offence of communicating in a public place for the purpose of purchasing or selling sexual services, which is paragraph 213(1)(c).

The court suspended the effects of its decision for one year, until December 19, 2014. If there is no legislative response this ruling will result in decriminalization of most adult prostitution-related activities.

The Supreme Court of Canada found that the impugned offences violate section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is the security of the persons who sell their own sexual services, by preventing them from taking measures to protect themselves while engaging in a risky but legal activity. Such protective measures include independently selling sexual services from a fixed indoor location, hiring bodyguards and drivers, and negotiating safer conditions for the sale of sexual services in public places.

Specifically, the offences were found to be grossly disproportionate or over-broad with respect to the legislative objectives, which

are to combat neighbourhood disruption or disorder and to safeguard public health and safety; to target pimps and the parasitic exploitative conduct in which they engage, which is living off the avails of the offence; and to take prostitution off the streets and out of public view in order to prevent street prostitution nuisances, which is the public communication offence in paragraph 213(1)(c).

The objectives of existing criminal law prostitution provisions as described by the court focus on the nuisance aspects of prostitution, with the exception of the living off the avails provision, which was found to target exploitative conduct. As I mentioned, construing these objectives and these offences narrowly led to findings that they were unconstitutionally over-broad and grossly disproportionate in relation to their objectives.

The Supreme Court of Canada was nonetheless clear that Parliament is not precluded from imposing limits on where and how prostitution may be conducted as long as it does so in a way that does not infringe on the constitutional rights of those who sell their own sexual services. That is precisely what Bill C-36 would do. It would criminalize the harmful conduct associated with prostitution while respecting the constitutional rights of all Canadians.

To start, Bill C-36 would make prostitution an illegal activity by criminalizing half of the prostitution transaction. This is done to show that the people who are trapped in this awful trade, largely women, are victims. It is showing compassion toward them.

Whenever prostitution, which involves the purchase and sale of sexual services, takes place, a criminal offence would be committed by the purchaser. This would be the first time in Canadian criminal law that purchasing sexual services from an adult has ever been criminalized.

The preamble in Bill C-36 explains why it is making prostitution illegal. It is a clear statement of the objectives of the Bill C-36 proposals for law reform, clarifying that Parliament sees prostitution as an inherently exploitative activity that always poses a risk of violence. Members of both the Liberal Party and the NDP have said that they agree, that it is exploitative, and that most of the people trapped in this awful trade are being exploited. Prostitution would no longer be viewed as creating merely neighbourhood disruption or disorder or street nuisances.

The preamble explains that prostitution is not only viewed as a form of exploitation of those subjected to it. It also recognizes the social harm caused by the normalization of sex as a commodity to be bought and sold, and it clarifies the importance of protecting human dignity and the equality of all Canadians by discouraging prostitution, which has a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, including women and children, and especially aboriginal women and girls.

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•(1605)

Accordingly, Bill C-36 seeks to denounce and prohibit the demand for prostitution and to continue to denounce and prohibit procuring others for the purposes of prostitution and the development of economic interests in exploiting others through prostitution. We hope these measures, over time, will reduce the incidence of prostitution in Canada and the exploitation of those who are trapped in this business.

It also seeks to denounce and prohibit the commercialization and institutionalization of prostitution, particularly when it occurs in businesses such as strip clubs, massage parlours, and through escort agencies, which is largely the case in my city of Mississauga. Finally, the bill seeks to protect communities from the harms associated with prostitution, including related criminality and the exposure of children to the sale of sex as a commodity. These are robust objectives that go far beyond what the Supreme Court of Canada found were the objectives of the existing criminal offences governing prostitution, thereby fundamentally altering the premise of any future charter analysis.

The new offences would have to be constitutionally analyzed through an entirely new lens, one that sees prostitution as a gendered practice, implicating the equality of women and minorities, one that sees prostitution as a practice that exploits those who sell their own sexual services, and one that sees prostitution as causing both community and social harm.

The Supreme Court of Canada expressed concern that the existing offences prevent the selling of sexual services from fixed indoor locations, which the court found to be the safest way to sell sex. If members read the decision, that is exactly what the three appellants, Bedford, Lebovitch, and Scott, asked for. They had all been in the business. They had all been owners of escort agencies, and they had all said, "When you're out on the street, you get beaten. There's no way to properly protect yourself", and they asked the court to give them the ability to do it safely indoors.

Notably, Bill C-36 criminalizes purchasing sexual services but not selling sexual services. Furthermore, it immunizes from prosecution those who sell their own sexual services with respect to any part they may play in the new purchasing, material benefit, procuring, and, I will point out for my friend, advertising offences. I would recommend that she take a look at proposed paragraph 286.5(1)(b) contained in Bill C-36, and she will find there a specific exemption for that.

It has been misunderstood by a number of commentators in the media. John Ivison and Andrew Coyne of the *National Post* and Tim Harper of the *Toronto Star*, got it wrong. They failed to read that provision of the bill, and therefore, based their articles on the absence of the ability of a sex worker to advertise her own services. I would say that Mr. Harper was corrected subsequently by his own colleague, Tonda MacCharles, in a later article and also on CTV's *Question Period*. Don Martin of CTV also got it wrong. They just failed to read the bill.

I hope they will be listening today and have a chance to take a look at that provision and perhaps comment on how this bill does not prevent sex workers from properly advertising their services in a safe

way. This means that persons who sell their own sexual services cannot be prosecuted when they sell sexual services from a fixed indoor location, whether independently or co-operatively. As long as the only benefit received from selling sexual services co-operatively in one location is the safety of proximity to others and each person receives only the profits from their own prostitution, no offence is committed. This approach comprehensively responds to the Supreme Court of Canada's safety concerns about the ability to sell sexual services indoors.

The Supreme Court of Canada's second major concern was that existing offences prevent those who sell sexual services from hiring bodyguards and others who may enhance their safety, but we all know the risks associated with allowing the development of economic interests in exploiting others through prostitution. Third parties may start out as bodyguards or drivers and then over time become abusive pimps who will stop at nothing to maximize profits by exploiting the prostitution of those who work for them, especially women and children.

Bill C-36 carefully balances the Supreme Court of Canada's safety concerns with the need to ensure that exploitative third parties are criminalized. It achieves this goal by criminalizing receiving a financial or other material benefit that is obtained or derived from the purchasing offence, limiting the scope of the offence through legislated exceptions and ensuring that the exceptions do not apply in exploitative circumstances.

•(1610)

The legislated exceptions ensure that persons who sell their own sexual services have the same ability to interact with others as anyone else. The bill would not criminalize those who legitimately receive material benefits from the prostitution of others.

Specifically, the exceptions clarify that the offence would not apply if the person who receives the benefit is in a legitimate living arrangement with a person who provides sexual services, such as a spouse, child, or roommate; if a person receives the benefit as a result of an obligation owed to them, such as where financial support is provided to a disabled parent or where a gift is purchased with the earnings of prostitution; and also if a person receives the benefit in return for goods or services offered on the same terms and conditions to the general public, such as an accountant, a taxi driver, or a security company that offers goods or services to anyone.

In addition to all of that, there is a specific exemption if a person receives the benefit in return for a service or good that is offered informally, such as babysitting or even protective services, as long as the benefit is proportionate to the value of the good or service the person performed and that they did not counsel or encourage prostitution. In short, an arm's-length relationship is required.

This is in the proposed new paragraph 286.2(4)(d) of the bill. It would provide for the sex workers, who my friend is concerned about, to hire a bodyguard on commercial terms to provide security in that safe place. That is why this bill stands on all four corners with the Bedford decision, in my view.

Government Orders

These exceptions reflect existing case law that carves out exceptions to the current living on the avails of prostitution offence. The legitimate living arrangement and the legal and moral obligation exceptions find their origin in the Ontario Court of Appeal's 1991 Grilo decision, which was cited as an authority on these issues by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Bedford case. The exception related to goods and services offered to the general public originates in a line of cases, starting with the 1962 House of Lords decision in Shaw.

The exceptions respond to the Supreme Court of Canada's concern that existing laws do not permit those who sell their own sexual services to take safety measures, such as hiring bodyguards and drivers. However, as I have said, Bill C-36 would strike a careful balance. The exceptions I have just described would not apply if the person who receives the benefit uses violence, intimidation, or coercion; abuses a position of trust, power, or authority; or provides any intoxicating substances to assist or encourage the other person's prostitution.

As we know, that is very often the case. They find young girls who maybe have run away. There has been a problem at home. They find them, they give them alcohol, they give them drugs, they get them addicted. Then they are their slaves, and they put them out on the street to feed that filthy habit over and over again.

The bill would also criminalize where a person procures another person's prostitution or if the benefit is received in the context of a commercial enterprise that offers sexual services for sale, such as a strip club, a massage parlour, or an escort agency in which prostitution takes place. We know those types of businesses are often run by criminal organizations, such as gangs and the Mafia. That is the kind of behaviour we want to criminalize. It is not what the women who are exploited are doing, but the people who are actually exploiting them.

This approach would make it very clear that the exceptions to the material benefit offence would not be available if exploitative conduct commonly practised by pimps is involved. Such an approach responds to the Supreme Court of Canada's safety concerns while at the same time providing protection from the exploitation that involvement in prostitution generally always causes.

The Supreme Court of Canada's final concern was that persons who sell their own sexual services be able to take steps to negotiate safer conditions for the sale of sexual services in public places. Existing laws criminalize all public communications for the purpose of either purchasing or selling sexual services. The Supreme Court of Canada found that this offence prevented those who sell their own sexual services from being able to negotiate safer conditions for their transactions in public places.

On the other hand, Bill C-36 proposes, first, a new offence that would criminalize communicating in any place for the purpose of purchasing sexual services, and second, a separate offence that would criminalize communicating for the purpose of selling sexual services, but—and I have to emphasize this—only in public places where children could reasonably be expected to be present.

●(1615)

Prohibiting all communication associated with the purchasing of sexual services is justified by the new legislative objective of reducing demand for sexual exploitation. In short, purchasing sexual services constitutes exploitative conduct. Attempting to purchase by communicating for that purpose is equally problematic. Prohibiting communication for the purposes of selling sexual services in public places where children can reasonably be expected to be present, on the other hand, in my view strikes a careful, justified, and reasonable balance between the interests of two vulnerable groups: those who are exploited through prostitution, and children who may be exposed to the sale of sex as a commodity and to the dangers associated with prostitution, such as the presence of drugs, pimps, and persons associated with organized crime.

My colleague, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, mentioned earlier that when she was a school teacher, there were pedophiles and pimps who hung around the schoolyard. They would approach young girls and try to entice them either to get in a car with the pedophile or to get into business with the pimp, and that is the kind of thing we are concerned about.

Bill C-36 does not prohibit persons who sell their own sexual services from communicating for that purpose in any public place other than when children could be harmed by exposure to prostitution.

Furthermore, the Supreme Court of Canada's Bedford ruling is clear that prostitution offences are intertwined, meaning that the offences impact on one another. Greater latitude in one measure, such as permitting prostitutes to obtain the assistance of security personnel, for example, might impact on the constitutionality of another measure, such as forbidding the nuisances associated with keeping a bawdy house.

The regulation of prostitution is a complex and delicate matter. I agree with the Supreme Court of Canada's conclusion that regulating prostitution is a complex and delicate matter. Bill C-36 recognizes this complex need by striking careful balances between sometimes competing interests.

In conclusion, the new legislation proposes an entirely new, made-in-Canada response to prostitution. It tackles the demand for prostitution to reduce its prevalence, thereby protecting those who are exploited through prostitution from the risk of violence caused by their involvement in it.

The new purchasing offence, together with modernized prostitution offences criminalizing third-party involvement in the prostitution of others, sends a clear message: prostitution is dangerous and exploitative and harms society itself. No parent would wish to see their children enter the world of abuse and exploitation that constitutes prostitution.

Legislative approaches that view prostitution as an exploitative practice that victimizes those who are subjected to it have recently received growing international support. I note that France's National Assembly passed a bill in December 2013 that would implement such an approach, and I understand that the bill is currently before France's Senate.

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Ireland's parliamentary justice committee recommended implementation of this type of approach in June 2013. The European Parliament recently endorsed such an approach in February 2014, and a United Kingdom parliamentary report recommended this type of law reform in March 2014.

Canada is not alone in its concern about prostitution's harms. These harms are real and require concerted effort to address. The government is committed to working with its provincial and territorial colleagues who enforce criminal law toward ensuring that prostitution's harms are not left unchecked.

Enacting Bill C-36 is the first step toward addressing prostitution's harms. Accordingly, I encourage all members of this House to join me in support of it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of questions, but I will save some for our work in committee.

I am not clear on how the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice interprets public places, so I would like him to clarify. For example, does he think that where Bill C-36 refers to an offence committed next to a school, that means only during school hours? Does this clause apply elsewhere in the bill to criminalize sex workers?

I asked the minister that question, but he never gave me an answer. Maybe that is because he does not know the answer. Maybe the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice knows. Can he define the expression "sexual services"? What does the bill mean by that?

Also, what about the new Bill C-13, which has just passed another stage without amendment, or rather with just a tiny, inconsequential one, even though we proposed 34 amendments? Could the provisions in Bill C-13, which give more powers to police officers, also apply in this context, with or without a warrant, if a person were advertising sexual services on the Internet? Would the Internet service provider also be guilty of a crime?

•(1620)

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, it is pretty clear, and I invite my hon. friend to read the legislation again, that there is a special exception for anyone who performs a service on a commercial basis for people who advertise their sexual services. That would include the Internet service provider and a website designer, so long as they were doing it on a commercial basis and were not exploiting by charging an unreasonably high amount. We know that pimps will charge \$250 for the services of a prostitute. The pimp keeps \$200 and the prostitute gets \$50 or less. That is the kind of exploitative behaviour we are talking about.

On the other question, it is reasonably clear that it is where a person under the age of 18 is reasonably expected to be present. People have to turn their minds to this. When they go out on the street to offer themselves for sexual services to any person who comes along in a car or on foot, they will have to look around to see if there are any children there or consider whether there could be any children there. We have to balance the rights of the sex worker with the rights of children not to become entwined in this terrible practice.

We are trying to reduce it, not encourage it. We are not trying to make it easier; we are just trying to make it safer.

I think police officers will use their discretion. Words like "reasonable expectation" are interpreted every day by the police under our Criminal Code, and they are interpreted by the courts. It will become clear very quickly over time as this legislation is enforced.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does the parliamentary secretary accept that there is probably no one more vulnerable than someone under the age of 18 selling sex on the streets? If he accepts that this is the case, then would he also accept that someone who is under the age of 18 would always be in a place where someone under the age of 18 is reasonably expected to be? If he accepts that, then anyone who is under the age of 18 will always be subject to criminal prosecution for communication.

Was it the intention of the Conservatives to pick the most vulnerable people in our society, saying that they were following through on what the Supreme Court wanted them to do by giving them a criminal record?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, as with anyone else, we hope it will not be the case that a person under 18 is unfortunately in this trade. We are criminalizing any kind of behaviour that forces people to get into it under the age of 18. Anybody who coerces a person under the age of 18 is guilty of a very serious offence. Any purchasers of the services of a person under 18 would not just get a fine; they would go to jail. They should think twice about trying to pick up that 18-year-old prostitute in the first place.

This would allow officers to take those vulnerable people into protective custody, introduce them to social workers, and get them off the street. We want them safely off the street.

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like the parliamentary secretary to comment on the opposition to this on both sides of the spectrum. One side thinks it is not strong enough because it would decriminalize the prostitutes, while the other side thinks it is too strong because it would go so far as to criminalize the purchasers.

In regard to the people who are against decriminalizing the prostitute, if it is the case that the person being prostituted is not a victim and is one of the perhaps 10% of the cases of people who want to be prostitutes and feel fulfilled, would the parliamentary secretary say that since no one is being victimized, there is no need to criminalize them?

On the other hand, if they are being victimized, should it be that they would not be criminalized either, but that the purchasers should be criminalized because they are clearly exploiting someone?

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● (1625)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is much debate on the other side about the percentage of people—mainly women, but also some young men and boys—who are in this trade. We know from many studies how exploitive and harmful it is to them. They are often beaten regularly by the pimps. They are made to become addicted to drugs. They are coerced in many other ways. We have to understand that any purchase of that sexual service is driving the demand for exploitive behaviour.

It might be the case one time out of ten. When a customer, a john—and I do not like that term, because I have a lot of good friends named John—goes out to find someone to fill this need, this requirement, he does not know whether the individual is a volunteer or someone being exploited. The important thing to note is that we are changing the law for the first time in Canadian history to criminalize all behaviours that exploit people who are trapped in this awful trade. This includes the purchasers, the pimps, the madams, the mafia that runs the brothel, the aboriginal gangs who traffic women into the business, and the people who traffic women from eastern Europe and other countries around the world. We do not want to see that happen in Canada.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify a few things. First, nowhere in this bill did I see anything about the criminalization of prostitutes who are minors. Johns and pimps who exploit minors or adult men or women are criminalized, but prostitutes who are minors are not criminalized. I want to talk about this, but I have not seen it anywhere in here.

The bill talks about criminalization by summary conviction—not indictment—of prostitutes soliciting in public places in general, not just public places where minors might be present.

I think this is the most tenuous part of the bill because if immunity is being offered, it should apply to solicitation in public places as well. However, given that this would be addressed by summary conviction, not indictment, these people will not end up with a criminal record.

Is this a way to bring them into the health care system? That is my question.

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been a great advocate on behalf of the safety of exploited persons for many years. In fact, I think she is the author of a book on that issue.

The member is absolutely right. There is no criminalization of a person under the age of 18 who is in this business. What it seeks to do is criminalize the behaviour of those who would choose to procure people under the age of 18 into this trade and those who would purchase the services of people under the age of 18. We are trying to cut off the demand and supply at the same time, while protecting the community.

The member is right about her description of a summary conviction. Where there is a solicitation in a public place where children are present or could reasonably be expected to be present, that would be nothing more than a fine for the sex worker.

● (1630)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Etobicoke North, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Rail Transportation.

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I must inform the House I will be sharing my time with my colleague, friend and neighbour, the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Criminal Code in response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Attorney General of Canada v. Bedford and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

In fact, this is legislation to regulate prostitution in our country. I am pleased to rise and speak to this issue because it is something that is of great concern to my riding. Prostitution exists in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. It think it is an important issue and one that is of great concern to many people in my riding. Some of those people have come to talk to me about it over the past few weeks.

To give some background on this, in December, the Supreme Court ruled on the provisions of the Criminal Code that prohibit keeping a common bawdy-house, living on the avails of prostitution and communicating for the purpose of engaging in prostitution.

The Supreme Court found that these provisions were unconstitutional, as follows:

[The current statutes impose] dangerous conditions on prostitution; they prevent people engaged in a risky—but legal—activity from taking steps to protect themselves.

Currently, under our Criminal Code, prostitution is legal but there is no help for the prostitutes who engage in this line of work.

I want to address a number of things because the bill is very complex. We want to know what the government is doing to help sex workers. We all wish prostitution did not exist. However, it does exist because there are clients, people who provide their sexual services and people who exploit others for sexual purposes.

Last year, I participated in the study conducted by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on the bill introduced by my colleague from Ahuntsic. A police inspector from Montreal said something fairly shocking. He said that, in Montreal, you can order a woman like you can order pizza. That is the situation we are currently facing.

As legislators, we must consider why sexual services are so readily available in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and small towns. I think it is mainly because there are customers, but also because the women are very vulnerable. Our government does not help them very much.

Rather than taking an approach that marginalizes extremely vulnerable sex workers, we should be taking practical measures to improve their safety and help them get out of the sex trade, if they so desire.

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We do not have statistics on the number of women who truly want to engage in this line of work. Earlier, a Conservative member said it was 10%, but we do not really have any idea what the actual number might be. In order to find out, we would have to allocate significant resources; provide financial support to these women; and offer them education, training and addiction treatment. There are many things we could do to help these women so that they do not get involved in the sex trade. Many women turn to prostitution because of poverty, whereas others do so to support an addiction. That is a fact.

According to the measures announced by the Conservatives in this bill, they are going to allocate \$20 million to help women across Canada get out of the sex trade. I think it is a bit of a stretch for the government to say that it will be able to solve this problem and help women with \$20 million. The government should be embarrassed about this announcement, which was made just a few weeks ago, on June 4.

• (1635)

That is one of the first things I want to talk about. There is prostitution in Lachine, close to my riding office. I once went up to one of these women to talk to her. As an MP, I believe I should speak to everyone.

This woman told me that she was doing this type of work because she has two children, that it pays more than other work and that, if she could, she would prefer to have another job, so she could have a better life. It is not necessarily a job that she likes, but as a poor, single mother with two children to raise, it is a simple way for her to make money quickly. That is unfortunate.

Our society could have decided to give her a good education, to help her, to provide support for her family and to establish community groups that would help her with workshops to raise her self-esteem. For example, in my riding, the organization La P'tite Maison de Saint-Pierre gives self-esteem workshops to women. That is the kind of community group we can support in order to keep women out of prostitution. When I hear that \$20 million will be given out across Canada, I wonder what that will mean for my riding. That is not very much in the way of concrete help for these women. That is really unfortunate.

I would like to delve deeper into the bill and see what it does. The bill will create new offences related to prostitution, namely purchasing sexual services. That means that we are criminalizing the people who buy sexual services. Once again, that is an attack on female prostitutes or young men, because I am told that young men prostitute themselves as well.

Groups that study various models around the world say that criminalizing the purchase of sexual services scares women in some ways. Even though the Conservatives say that selling those services on the street corner will be prohibited, let us not kid ourselves; given the means made available to address the situation, there will still be women on street corners.

Let us assume that a woman is on the street corner and that a client pulls up in his car; obviously, she will not take the time to talk to the man or to look inside his car to make sure that there are no weapons or other items that could be dangerous for her.

Right now, when that happens, women certainly take the time to look inside to see whether there is a rope or something that could harm her or be dangerous for her. Under this bill, she will not do that. Clearly, she will quickly get in the car, which will be more dangerous for her.

In my view, this provision does not help sex workers. Given that this trade does exist, we need to ask ourselves what we can do for the health and safety of these workers. According to the Supreme Court decision, we must work to ensure the safety of these workers. Whether we like it or not, this is a legal activity in our system, and it must be regulated.

The bill makes changes that have to do with receiving a material benefit, advertising sexual services and communicating for the purpose of selling sexual services in a public place where children can “reasonably” be expected to be present. I have a problem with the word “reasonably”. It seems inappropriate.

I want to name some people who support us because this bill does not respond to the Supreme Court's decision.

The NDP calls on the government to refer Bill C-36 to the Supreme Court. It must do more to help prostitutes get out of prostitution, for example, through education, prevention and social housing. All Canadians have the right to work without the threat of violence. This bill does not solve that problem.

Steve Sullivan, the former ombudsman for victims of crime, is one of the people who agrees with us. This very credible man said:

Back in December, everyone seemed to agree on one point: The law shouldn't criminalize sex workers. This bill will do just that—if they communicate...in public places where a child could reasonably be expected to be present.

• (1640)

Emmett Macfarlane said:

These provisions are not only bad policy, but they undoubtedly raise the same set of concerns the Supreme Court addressed when striking down the old provisions last December.

It is important to understand that we need to send this bill to the Supreme Court so that it can rule on whether we will end up with the same problem. We would then have to wait another year for provisions that truly help women get out of this situation.

No one here can prove to me that the Conservatives are truly helping women in our country. I do not think that this bill is proof of that either.

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to respond to a comment that was made earlier about the meaning of “reasonably expected to be present” with respect to persons under the age of 18.

First of all, this test does have a meaning in criminal law. It is used in the provision that authorizes courts to impose prohibition orders on child sex offenders. That is section 161 of the Criminal Code. The provision that authorizes the imposition of peace bonds on suspected child sex offenders is section 810.1 of the Criminal Code.

Government Orders

Whether a particular location constitutes a public place where children can reasonably be expected to be present is a factual determination made by a court. This approach affords courts the discretion to apply the tests reasonably in different contexts. The objective of this offence is to protect children from exposure to prostitution, which the government views as a harm in and of itself. It criminalizes communication for the purposes of selling sexual services in these narrow circumstances. Bill C-36 recognizes the different interests at play, which include the need to protect from exploitation those who sell their sexual services as well as the need to protect vulnerable children from prostitution's harm.

I wonder if the hon. member could comment on that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his question and comment. Perhaps he is right. I may feel that the wording is inappropriate, but perhaps it is used elsewhere. I would like to thank him for pointing that out.

In any event, I would like to continue with what I saying. I still find it odd. Of course, I do not want to see prostitutes next to a schoolyard. The hon. member used that example earlier, in his speech. There is a high school near my house, and I too would be concerned to see prostitutes or pimps there recruiting young people who are at the school.

This bill does not provide any tools and does not even attempt to determine why prostitution exists. I think that the main focus of our work here is to figure out what we can do so that prostitution no longer exists. We can regulate it and put all kinds of provisions in place, but we need to ask the fundamental question of what needs to be done so that there are fewer prostitutes in our country. We can criminalize them as much as we want, but that will not reduce the number of sex workers. That is what I think we should be focusing on, together. Many national groups in Canada would be willing to work with us to reach that goal. That is the direction we should be heading in.

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech.

I would invite her to look at most of the studies that have been done in Europe. We are incredibly lucky that, over there, people have already tried legalization and the so-called abolitionist Swedish system. The observation has been that, in the legalization system, there is a marked increase in prostitution, both in terms of the number of prostitutes and in terms of human trafficking. As for reducing the number of prostitutes, as the hon. member suggested, we can see that, in a system like Sweden's, there is a marked decrease in the number of prostitutes.

Where I tend to agree with my colleague is that criminalizing prostitutes in a public place, even by summary conviction, is problematic. I would like to make a slight clarification. Criminalization by summary conviction may involve a criminal record, but not automatically so. I wanted to clarify that. However, apart from that small element, that one subsection of the bill, I feel that we should all be working together in the same direction, but not towards legalization, because the legalization of prostitution is the legalization of violence against women.

•(1645)

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. Indeed, it is a question of safety. It can very easily be argued that the Swedish model of criminalization drives women into the shadows. It is easy for them to say that prostitution decreases. However, they do not know how many women there are, because they do not know where to find them. They join criminal groups, or they hide because it is prohibited.

I refuse to believe that by criminalizing prostitution, it will be easy to solve the problem and fewer women will get into prostitution.

We might also wonder if these women are safe now. If we move towards a legalization model, prevention is much easier. It is much easier to keep women safer. If we adopt a model focused on criminalization, we drive women into the shadows. Normally, I really like the work that my colleague does, but on this point, I do not agree with her. Criminalization is not necessarily the way to go if we want to keep women safer.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to debate Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Criminal Code in response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Attorney General of Canada v. Bedford and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

In my speech, I will read excerpts from the unanimous ruling of the Supreme Court to provide some context for the decision and the government's response, which takes the form of the bill we are debating.

Last December, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that section 210, as well as paragraphs 212(1)(j) and 213(1)(c) of the Criminal Code—which prohibit people from keeping a bawdy-house, living on the avails of prostitution and communicating for the purpose of engaging in prostitution—violate the charter, because they infringe upon the right of sex workers and the security of their person.

The court ruled that current laws impose:

...*dangerous* conditions on prostitution; they prevent people engaged in a risky—but legal—activity from taking steps to protect themselves from the risks.

The court therefore asked the government to regulate prostitution “as long as it does so in a way that does not infringe the constitutional rights of prostitutes”.

In addition, an article in today's edition of *La Presse* indicates that the government seems more interested in imposing a new repressive model than in eliminating the problems identified by the Supreme Court.

Is the Minister of Justice's Bill C-36 a thoughtful and sensible response to the Supreme Court decision in the Bedford case? It would appear not. Once again, the Conservatives are using the big stick approach rather than a nuanced one. I would even go so far as to say that they are using a snowplow to remove everything in their path.

Government Orders

Will this bill protect the health and safety of sex workers? I do not think so. Will the bill protect women and girls caught in a cycle of dependence, violence and victimization? I do not think so. Will this bill prevent women, girls and boys from getting caught up in prostitution? I do not think so. Will this bill help support programs to assist people who want to get out of this situation? I do not think so.

I do not think so because this bill does not focus on prevention, but rather on repression. It does not consider the complexity of human nature and the reality of the society we live in, a society where appearances and money are strong lures, to the detriment of human beings and helping each other.

• (1650)

[English]

This was mentioned yesterday in the *Winnipeg Sun's* editorial:

Like with other criminal activity, laws prohibiting it rarely eliminates the problem....

While we want the government to crack down on pimps, human traffickers and people preying on the truly vulnerable, there's nothing to suggest this law will reduce the demand or increase protections for women.

This is a newspaper that I do not often quote, but it was quite revealing.

[Translation]

Last winter, I attended an information session organized by station 13 of the LaSalle police. Representatives from all the community organizations in greater southwest Montreal heard from two community officers with the multidisciplinary investigations and youth coordination unit of the Montreal police service.

These experienced police officers gave us a realistic and frank description of prostitution and pimping. They want to change people's thinking about prostitutes and, above all, suggest ways to help those prostitutes who want to get out of the business. The program that they have put in place, "Les survivantes" or "the survivors", gives female victims of this vicious circle the means to break out of it.

They also said that the image of pimping was somewhat glorified in popular culture and could be appealing to individuals who decide that the sexual exploitation of others is an easy way to make money. In their presentation, they demonstrated that prostitution was not a choice for many, but rather a lack of choice.

In our opinion, this bill, introduced by the Minister of Justice, does not respond to the Supreme Court ruling regarding the safety and protection of prostitutes. By making successive cuts to programs to prevent violence against women, the Conservatives really dropped the ball when it comes to dealing with this problem. Their systematic refusal to move forward with a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women leads us to believe that they have a very limited understanding of prostitution and violence against women.

The NDP recognizes that real action needs to be taken right away to improve the safety of sex workers and help them to get out of the sex trade, if they are not there by choice. To that end, significant resources must be allocated to income support, education, training, poverty relief and substance abuse programs for these women. We need a government that works with them to implement a comprehensive strategy to protect and support women.

I would also like to point out that clauses 46 to 48 refer to an equally controversial bill that was criticized by the new Privacy Commissioner, and that is the bill on cyberbullying. We call on the government and the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to go back to the drawing board and hold real consultations that take into account the opinions of a wide range of legal experts, stakeholder groups, the appropriate authorities and the main people involved, sex workers. The minister should also refer Bill C-36 to the Supreme Court to get its opinion on whether the bill honours the ruling in the Bedford case.

This government, as a legislator, must ensure that the bills introduced in the House are consistent with our Constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. What is more, the government has a moral responsibility to protect and ensure the safety of communities and workers, no matter what their occupation. We believe that the measures introduced and the announcements made by the Minister of Justice are inadequate and will not achieve the expected results.

• (1655)

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague quoted some sex workers. I wonder if she has heard some of these quotes.

Earlier today, Katarina MacLeod, who was beaten, abused, and raped repeatedly from the age of five, forced into the sex trade when she got a little older, and then worked for 15 years in that business, said that first of all there is no safe place to carry on the sex business, and second, had Bill C-36, the government's new prostitution legislation, been around when she was in the business, there would be no more demand and no more supply.

Had that bill been in place, maybe she would be less scarred today.

One of her colleagues, Timea Nagy, a native of Budapest, Hungary, came to Canada 14 years ago as a housekeeper. However, when she arrived, she was kidnapped and forced to work in Toronto's sex industry until, one day, she escaped. She is now a founder of an organization that helps victims of trafficking. She said:

I speak for the hundreds of children and girls I have met and talked to and rescued in the last 14 years who have been and continue to be raped, violated and exploited against their will.

She challenged the idea that prostitution is a profession. She called it "oppression 90% of the time".

She, too supports Bill C-36. She said women deserve to be protected by this country.

Cassandra Diamond, another former prostitute, who operated a brothel, said sex workers should feel safer because of this bill. She said:

I wish Bill C-36 had been in place for me when I needed it.

I wonder if the member would comment.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. H  l  ne LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice keeps using the same examples.

I would like to remind him that the Criminal Code already has provisions on human trafficking, exploitation and abuse. What he is talking about is not part of the bill. Rape and other such offences are already covered by the Criminal Code. Bill C-36 should be a response to the Bedford decision on the safety of sex workers. The Criminal Code of Canada already covers what the hon. member provided as an example. The Criminal Code has the answers for the cases he just mentioned. It is in the Criminal Code and not in Bill C-36. That is not the purpose of the bill.

Ms. Fran  oise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to pick up on what the parliamentary secretary was saying. I mentioned in my speech something that I have noticed many times when talking to people. There are those who strongly believe, with conviction, that the Swedish model is the way to go, while others believe that New Zealand's model, which is based on decriminalization, is the right choice. Neither of these models are perfect, even to those who defend them. Each group felt that their model was the best, but no one said that their model would get rid of prostitution completely.

However, I just heard the parliamentary secretary suggest that Bill C-36 would succeed in doing what no other country in this world, on our planet Earth, has done.

I would like the hon. member to say a few words about that and tell me whether she is as optimistic as the Conservatives about the 100% success rate we can expect from Bill C-36.

• (1700)

Ms. H  l  ne LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague, who is our justice critic and who does an extraordinary job providing us with guidance on bills that we do not understand. It is true that the government often takes parts of the Criminal Code and rewrites them, even though things already exist.

In fact, she is entirely right. The Conservatives carried out token consultations that they used as a basis for drafting a bill. They are always telling us about the same tragic and pathetic cases, even though they are already covered in the Criminal Code and could give rise to charges if there are complaints.

I think that the government is going to have to sit down, conduct real consultations and listen to a broader variety of points of view, so that it is able to put forward bills that comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and will not be called into question by the Supreme Court.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this debate today because this is a topic in which I have been involved for many years, stretching back to before I became a member of the House.

I became involved in this issue because of the work of a group in my riding called PEERS, the Prostitution Empowerment Education and Resource Society, which runs a drop-in centre and an office in the municipality where I was a councillor. Everything that allows me

to speak with some grounding today comes from my experience working with this group. I want to thank PEERS at the beginning of this speech for the time it has shared with me in helping me understand the realities of sex work in Canada.

This group is a peer-led drop-in centre and outreach program, meaning the sex workers themselves run these programs. Who better to try to work with people involved in the sex trade than those who have credibility with their colleagues to talk about those kinds of realities?

We have heard many things in the media discussion of this bill that clearly do not reflect the reality that sex workers face every day.

The PEERS outreach programs run both day and night. The night programs are extremely important for the safety of sex workers. They do everything from involving sex workers in safe sex education to providing things like condoms. They also keep a check on where sex workers are, and if they are not seen, they are checked on to find out if they are safe.

The group helps to compile a bad date list, which it disseminates, bad date list meaning those men who have used violence against sex workers. This list is compiled so sex workers can identify them and avoid becoming victims of violence.

The day program does a lot of other things.

PEERS still continues to operate these programs despite a severe funding crunch, which has reduced the amount of money available to it and the number of hours it can run its outreach day and night programs. Its day program has been reduced to one day a week.

These services operate on a shoestring. The drop-in centre is not a glamorous place with a large-screen TV or many other things people might associate with a drop-in centre. It is a basic operation and really runs on the volunteer services of people who are either sex workers themselves or are allies who are trying to make sure that those involved in sex work are as safe as they can possibly be.

For its efforts, PEERS was recognized by the provincial Ministry of Justice with an award for leadership in crime prevention and community safety, a recognition by the provincial government of the extremely important role it plays in helping to reduce crime and keep everybody in the community safer.

PEERS is the result of an initiative of sex workers themselves, assisted by a woman who had been a long-time columnist with the *Victoria Times Colonist*. Jody, who worked with PEERS for many years, really became involved because of some of the work she was doing as a journalist. She met sex workers and found out about the difficulties they were having. She played a large role in helping to get the centre together.

Government Orders

I first went to the PEERS centre in my riding more than five years ago. I saw first-hand the wide range of services it offers. It plays an important role in getting access to health and social services in the community for primarily women but also transgender women and some gay men. Quite often these people lack ID because it might have been stolen or they lack a fixed address. As a result, they face obstacles to getting the services that all of us take for granted. PEERS plays an important role in helping them find housing. Victoria is an expensive community with very limited housing options. One of its important roles is to locate safe housing.

A lot of people are not aware of the fact that many of the sex workers in my community are mothers with kids to support. Whatever we think about people involved in sex work, those mothers I met were just trying to put a roof over their heads and food on the table. One of them told me that she has three kids and a minimum wage, part-time job. She cannot put a roof over their heads. She cannot clothe her kids or feed them. That is how she ended up in sex work. She continues in sex work for the future of her kids. This lady is a volunteer at the centre, who helps other people make the best of the life they find themselves in at the time. That is important because of the stigma that is placed generally on sex workers.

● (1705)

The drop-in centre became a place that offers support for those involved in sex work. It is a safe place they can go. There is someone they can talk to and a connection to the community to help end the isolation that many sex workers find themselves in. The centre also offers support for those who desire to leave the sex trade. A very important part of what it does is identify those who want out, who may have gotten there through circumstances that are not so pleasant. However, they end up at the centre. The centre helps them access job training programs, access education and even to the point of helping them to prepare resumé to find a different kind of employment.

All of these things go on because of the generosity of volunteers and the solidarity that sex workers in my community have shown for each other to help themselves out and to keep themselves safe.

A key part of everything that PEERS does is harm reduction, such as education on safer sex, access to addiction counselling and, as I mentioned, collecting and disseminating bad date information about violent clients in my community.

When the Bedford decision was clearly approaching last fall, I decided I needed to get better informed about the issue. I had been involved with PEERS since I was a city councillor. It had come to us to ask for a property tax exemption for its drop-in centre. I am proud to say that the community of Esquimalt unanimously voted a property tax exemption for the centre, as we would any other community service organization that was putting in these huge volunteer hours. It was not even controversial. The community agreed it was performing this very valuable role in our community.

I had been on walks with PEERS people. They do an annual walk, for which the theme is sex workers rights equal human rights. They were very surprised that I continued to go on that walk after I became a municipal councillor, and then after when I became a member of Parliament. It is not a large walk and it does not always

attract the right kind of attention. However, what they are trying to do is what we in the House are trying to do: to get people to recognize that sex workers come from all kinds of backgrounds. They come from all kinds of life circumstances. They are Canadian citizens with the right to be treated with dignity and the right to live their lives free from violence.

I expected the Bedford decision would go the way it did. Having taught criminal justice for many years it seemed likely the Supreme Court would throw out these laws around prostitution, which actually made life more dangerous for those involved. As part of trying to inform myself, I met with Stella. I met with other national organizations. I met with social science researchers at the University of Victoria in my community. I learned a lot from all of those. However, where I learned the most was I asked PEERS if a group of sex workers would be willing to sit down with me and talk for an afternoon about what they thought should happen if the Supreme Court threw out the laws on prostitution.

I spent an afternoon sitting with a group of 12 women actively involved in sex work in my community. People have asked do people know sex workers, or have they talked to sex workers. I got to know these people very well and I have nothing but respect for them for the way they are trying to do their best in the circumstances in which they find themselves. Some have chosen to be there, and I do accept when they say they have chosen to be there. Some, like the single mom, have made bad choices and have made the best choice they can for their kids.

None of the women I met with were trafficked, although all of them knew of cases where that had happened in the community. However, one thing they had in common was they had all experienced violence at some point as a sex worker. Therefore, at the end of that discussion, when I asked them what the goal for legislation should be, their answer was harm reduction and safety for those involved in sex work.

When this government bill was tabled, I got a call from the people at PEERS. Like most MPs, I was not able to take it immediately because I was in the House, but when I went back and talked to them, it was a very emotional conversation. They were very, very upset with the legislation they saw tabled. Many of them felt there were some very good intentions from many people on the other side of the House, but that the bill had missed the mark for them. They felt very strongly that it would make their lives more difficult and more dangerous.

● (1710)

When we talk about what some people like to call the Nordic model, they were very clear that criminalizing one half of a transaction inevitably makes the other half dangerous. It will drive it underground and make it more difficult to identify the clients in advance, because the clients will become more secretive. All of the various objections we can imagine that involve safety were raised with me in that phone call.

Government Orders

Subsequently, the executive director, Marion Little, made a public statement. I want to read her public statement, because it reflects the conversation that I had with members of the board of directors of PEERS when this legislation was introduced. Marion Little said:

This is devastating. People's lives will be affected, and we barely have the resources to help them now....

I don't have any confidence those funds will go to experienced organizations providing unconditional care for sex workers.

That is what PEERS does. PEERS does not judge the people who come through the door. It does not judge why they are there and it does not insist that they are doing anything that needs to be changed. What PEERS says is, "How can we help with unconditional care for sex workers?" It is opposed to the legislation and worried about the \$20 million of funding that the government is talking about. It is worried that it will go to organizations that have no experience in working with sex workers, or organizations not run by sex workers themselves, as PEERS is, or organizations that apply a moral stigma at the beginning of their approach to sex workers. It is very concerned about that.

I would like the government to develop an approach that better protects women and offers increased support to women who are involved in sex work. In addition, on this side we want to address all the related issues about vulnerable people who have been ignored, issues like education, addiction treatment, affordable housing, all the things that will enable people who may have ended up in the sex trade and do not want to be there to make better choices for their future. We have to address those issues that surround the sex trade and the limited opportunities that many women have to take care of themselves, which is what they want to do.

The bill before us would amend the Criminal Code to create an offence that prohibits purchasing sexual services or communicating in any place for that purpose. That is a big concern that the PEERS director who I spoke with had. The bill says "any public place". Therefore, where is it that sex workers are going to be forced to practise their trade where there are no other people? If they practise their trade where there are no other people, they are inherently placed in danger.

The bill would create an offence that would prohibit the advertisement of sexual services and authorize the courts to seize materials containing such advertisements and their removal from the Internet. Many of the sex workers I talked to use ads and the Internet to help screen clients and share information about who is dangerous and who is not.

The government is again doing what it quite often does, which is addressing a problem that really does not exist when talking about sex work around schools. I know one commentator who said he had taken his kids to school thousands of times and had never seen sex workers working, first of all, at those hours and, second, around schools. Somehow it casts this aspersion on sex workers that there are some kind of predators after our children. In fact, what I have found in my community is many of them have children of their own they are really trying to provide for.

I do not believe that this bill is consistent with the Supreme Court decision on the charter. I was very pleased to hear the member for Gatineau expressing our position that we would like to see this

referred to the Supreme Court now. Let us send it to the Supreme Court. The government has the ability to do this. Instead of wasting many years of battles in court, we could get advice from the Supreme Court at this point, which would say whether this meets the test that it set in the Bedford decision. I personally do not believe it does, but the government must believe it meets those tests or it would not have introduced the legislation in the House. There should be no risk for the government in referring this to the Supreme Court if it genuinely believes that it meets the tests of the Bedford decision.

• (1715)

The other thing that, again, was expressed directly to me by sex workers from PEERS in my riding is that they wonder who is going to look after sex workers while this bill that would make their lives more dangerous and more difficult goes through. We would have many more years before this would get to the Supreme Court, perhaps four, five, or six years. In the meantime they feel that this would make their lives more dangerous in ways that were absolutely prohibited by the Supreme Court decision. They would be forced to undergo that violence and be subjected to those negative conditions for an additional four to five years, when all the Supreme Court really authorized was one year for Parliament to get a new bill together that respects the Bedford decision.

Again I would echo the member for Gatineau in her call that this be referred to the Supreme Court now, before it is enacted into law and before it has those damaging impacts. If the government members do not believe that, then I do not understand their reluctance to refer it to the Supreme Court. The Conservatives have certainly referred other decisions to the Supreme Court, and I know this did not always go well for them, but obviously they have more confidence in this bill.

Others have said to me that I certainly must support the \$20 million that the government is devoting to assisting sex workers. I would say to that, "Yes, absolutely; I think that is a great idea." I would like to see where that is in the budget. I would also like to see that it does not have strings attached. Again, it was the director of PEERS who said to me that she is afraid this money will go to an organization that stigmatizes the sex trade and therefore will not be able to reach the women who most need the help.

I do not sense a great appetite for the government to listen on this bill and make changes to the bill. That would be my second choice after referring it to the Supreme Court. I guess what we will be forced to do on this side as it proceeds is try to make the arguments and attract the government members' attention and have them listen to the people who would be placed most at risk by this bill, and that is the sex workers.

I want to close by thanking the sex workers in my community for helping me understand the situation of their daily lives and how this bill would actually be a threat to them. I want to conclude my remarks by saying I look forward to the day when we have a truly inclusive society in Canada that does not stigmatize any of our members and put them at risk of violence.

Government Orders

● (1720)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite. I know his heart is in the right place and I congratulate him for working with this one group in his area. I think that is really great.

However, saying that, I just want to correct a couple of things.

The first thing is we do not take the bill back to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court said, “It will be for Parliament, should it choose to do so, to devise a new approach, reflecting different elements of the existing regime.” The Supreme Court has demanded that we give a response within a year.

Also, when the member was saying that the sex workers were alarmed because he told them that they would get arrested in any public place, that is in places only where children under the age of 18 could be. The whole purpose of this is to respect the sex workers and to help them, as I know the member opposite obviously wants to do. However, I want to read something. There is a mother, Kathy King, whose daughter was in prostitution. She said that she would like to express her appreciation that Bill C-36 declares the purchase of sexual services an illegal act and supports the sex worker. She went on to say that since the disappearance of her daughter in 1997 and the discovery of her mutilated body a month later, she speaks for those who did not survive their entanglement in a world many of us do not understand. Here is a mom who really loved her child. With Bill C-36, there would be exit programs. The \$30 million would help those girls to have a different kind of life.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member for Kildonan—St. Paul has used up two minutes now. I would ask the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca to respond.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that all of us have our hearts in the right place in this House, which is why we come here. We come here to represent the diversity of Canada, and so it is not a question of someone here having their heart in the wrong place.

I would say, with respect, that the Supreme Court gave Parliament a year to come up with a new approach. Nothing in that says that we cannot ask it if this new approach meets the test in Bedford.

Cabinet always has the right, in our legal system, to refer a matter directly to the Supreme Court in advance. Nothing prevents us from checking at this point. As I said before, if the government thinks the bill is constitutional, then it should then be very happy to send it off, get a ruling, and then proceed.

The member said that I told sex workers that they could be arrested in any public place, and I want to go back to that. When I got the call, I had not even read the bill. They told me what was in the bill; I did not tell them what was in the bill. However, the impact of the bill is plain for them to see.

I have the greatest of sympathy for people who have been trafficked or who end up involved in violence and death as a result of their involvement in the sex trade. My sympathy is no less than anyone else's in this House. However, I think we have to be careful in making policy by selecting the most extreme cases.

In my riding, the PEERS organization works with 450 women who are involved in the sex trade. They are a representative sex worker-run organization, and their concerns need to be taken very seriously.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciated the comments put forward by my colleague from the NDP.

The government has maintained that the proposed legislation is in compliance and satisfies the Supreme Court Bedford ruling. A lot of people do not agree with the government in that case.

When the Conservative member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley was speaking to some party faithful in Parrsboro just last week, he said the Conservatives will not put up with the Supreme Court decision. This was the comment he shared, which no doubt was a little home cooking for the base. However, he went on to say, “We don't care what the constitutional lawyers say”.

Does this sort of peel back the veil on what has been put forward by the government? Does my colleague believe that this peels back the veil and tells us what the legislation is really all about, which is to appease the Conservative base?

● (1725)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, it does not serve much purpose for me to speculate today on the motives on the other side. I am really talking about the content of the bill.

As the member pointed out, the government seems to believe that the bill meets the constitutional tests set out in the Bedford case. Therefore, I would like to see the Conservatives refer it to the Supreme Court to find out if they are right or not.

We have seen some signs of disrespect for the court system from some members on the other side of the House, but I would hope that is not a general pattern. One of the ways they could demonstrate that is by sending this proposed law to the Supreme Court to get a ruling before we engage in long and involved legal wrangling and spend thousands of dollars that could better go to benefiting sex workers involved in the trade than to lawyers and court processes.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very thoughtful presentation and for his years of service in both orders of government. It is very appreciated, and he has brought actual on-the-ground experience to share today.

Private Members' Business

I too have been reaching out to people in my community. I have met with a series of groups of sex workers. I have also met with an incredible organization, the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation. As this organization, CEASE, reviews the bill and looks at it more carefully, it is shifting its initial perspective. Initially members of CEASE were very excited that the government had come forward and was providing some money to support their efforts. They work diligently to support sex workers and to try to work with those who are purchasing sex, explaining to them that in many circumstances they are putting women or men or children at risk in trafficking and trying to get them to understand the risks inherent in the trade.

It was deeply troubling to hear, in a question from the other side to my hon. colleague, the suggestion that the court just said to come up with something that would work. That is not actually what the Supreme Court said. It said very clearly that there would be a problem if legislation infringes article 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I keep hearing concerns expressed about section 15. We keep hearing this invention of what the government thought this section might mean, but when we actually read the provision, we see that it puts a lot of sex workers at risk.

I wonder if the member could speak to that aspect in relation to the very workers he is talking about. Of course, he comes from the land of Pickton. Is this bill putting these very kinds of victims at greater risk?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I will say to the member for Edmonton—Strathcona the same thing I said earlier. I want to avoid the dramatic today. I want to avoid the other parallels and just say that I am not claiming to have done great work with the PEERS organization myself. I am claiming to benefit from the great work that they have done in my community and from their advice in saying to me very clearly that they believe that the bill puts their lives at risk. For that reason, I will be voting against the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 16, 2014, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1730)

[English]

SERVICE CANADA MANDATE EXPANSION ACT

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.) moved that Bill C-247, An Act to expand the mandate of Service Canada in respect of the death of a Canadian citizen or Canadian resident, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to speak on my private member's Bill C-247, An Act to expand the mandate of Service Canada in respect of the death of a Canadian citizen or Canadian resident. I am equally delighted that the member for Avalon agreed to second my bill.

If passed, the Service Canada mandate expansion act would require the Minister of Employment and Social Development to implement all measures necessary to establish Service Canada as the single point of contact for the Government of Canada in respect of all matters relating to the death of a Canadian citizen or a Canadian resident.

We must improve the system that presently exists for officially notifying the federal government of the death of a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. The notification process must be made easier. It must be streamlined for the benefit of Canadians and, frankly, for the benefit of efficiency in government.

Under the current system, following a death, a bereaved Canadian may have to contact a multitude of federal government departments and send numerous death notifications, because there is no single point of contact for the information to be processed. This can be a very painful, tedious, and sometimes confusing task for a grieving individual who must repeat the same information to different government departments. As well, each federal government department can have different documentation requirements to establish proof of death.

As parliamentarians, we need to provide relief to grieving seniors, survivors, caregivers, and estate representatives, who are responsible for the settling of obligations of a deceased with the Government of Canada.

It is essential that we deal with the issue of bereavement in a professional and compassionate way. Bill C-247 will improve a federal government service and reduce the burden on Canadians during a difficult life transition.

I would like to outline some examples of the range of possible types of contacts to explain the justification for Bill C-247.

According to the Service Canada website, the department must be contacted with the notification of date of death when an old age security and Canada pension plan beneficiary passes away. Service Canada would also have to be contacted for the application of any survivor benefits.

Private Members' Business

If the deceased was receiving employment insurance benefits before his or her death, the legal representative must complete a form to cancel the benefits. If the deceased person had not applied for EI benefits to which they were entitled, the legal representative may apply for the benefits in the name of the deceased person. If a deceased individual had lived in Canada and in another country, their survivor could be eligible to apply for pension and benefits because of a social security agreement.

Besides contacting Service Canada, a legal representative would also have to make a separate effort to contact the Canada Revenue Agency to provide a deceased's date of death. In addition, the estate is responsible for the completion of final tax returns and making arrangements to stop payments on any GST or HST credits.

If the deceased was receiving the Canada child tax benefit, the universal child care benefit, or the working income tax benefit, those benefits must be stopped, and if applicable, survivor benefits can be applied for.

If the deceased was a Canadian veteran, Veterans Affairs should also be contacted for the notification and cancellation of benefits and the application for survivor benefits. These benefits may include the benefits for survivors of disability pension recipients, the death benefit, the earnings lost benefit for survivors or children, and the supplementary retirement benefit, to name just a few.

If the deceased had a valid Canadian passport, a legal representative should contact Passport Canada to return the document by mail to the Passport Canada program for cancellation. This transaction would have to include a letter with a copy of the death certificate, indicating if the cancelled passport should be destroyed or returned.

If the deceased was a member of the public service pension plan, the Government of Canada Pension Centre under the Department of Public Works and Government Services would have to be contacted immediately for any survivor lump sum, an ongoing pension, and one-time supplementary death benefits.

If the deceased possessed a Canadian citizenship certificate or a permanent resident card, the legal representative must send a letter enclosing the citizenship certificate or PR card and a photocopy of the death certificate, funeral home notice, or newspaper report to the case processing centre in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

If a deceased owned a firearm, the RCMP may also have to be contacted in order to make any necessary transfers. Documentation must be submitted to confirm that the registered owner is deceased and that the new owner is eligible to acquire and possess the firearm.

If a deceased was a fisher in possession of a licence from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the department would have to be notified and the transfer of the licence would have to be arranged.

• (1735)

Respecting social insurance numbers, informing Service Canada of a death reduces the possibility of anyone fraudulently using a SIN. However, there are different rules depending on which province or territory in which an individual lives. Individuals are required to inform Service Canada of the death of a family member if the death occurred in Saskatchewan, the territories, or outside Canada, but not

if they are from another province, where it is sent automatically from provincial vital statistics agencies.

Death notifications therefore are not yet consistent throughout Canada. As well, this notification does not successfully trigger the series of responses intended by my legislation.

It is clear with the examples I have raised that Canadians are faced with a labyrinth of possible contacts and different requirements for a death notification to the Government of Canada.

As a lawyer, I was often asked to do this work on behalf of estates because of the confusion and frustration estate executors faced when executing their duties. As well, the process is made even more difficult because the information that is provided on the Service Canada website is not comprehensive. Bereaved Canadians should not have to spend hours online searching for information or have to call the department's call centre to get information. For example, that is the case with the cancelling of Citizenship and Immigration identification.

The creation of one point of contact at Service Canada would remove the guesswork for survivors and estate administrators who may not be fully aware of the deceased's obligations to the federal government. A first contact to Service Canada would trigger a notification process to all relevant departments, which would then communicate to the deceased's estate representatives the responsibilities for the cancellation of benefits, the return of identification documents, and access to any survivor benefits.

Bill C-247 would also reduce the costs of the administration of estates, making it good consumer legislation as well. In fact, the United Kingdom already has the "Tell Us Once" registration process. France has the online service portal "Mon Service Public" for death notifications.

I would like to take a moment to discuss Service Canada and why it is a natural fit to serve as the single point of contact for the notification of a death to the federal government.

Service Canada, located within the Department of Employment and Social Development, helps Canadians access a range of federal government services and benefits. It was created to improve the delivery of those services to its citizens. It is a multi-channel delivery network whose charter is to provide Canadians with one-stop, easy-to-access, personalized service and to bring Government of Canada services together in a single service delivery network. It was created within the former HRSDC to serve as a single window for Canadians to access government programs and services. Bill C-247 is a practical expansion of Service Canada's mandate and the logical choice for bereavement reporting.

Private Members' Business

I would like to discuss the fall 2013 Auditor General's report. In chapter 2, titled "Access to Online Services", the AG examined whether the online services offered by federal organizations were client focused and supported by service delivery strategies with defined and measured benefits. It also examined whether there was a Government of Canada strategy for delivering online services and an integrated service delivery among major partners. The report had a number of findings that are relevant to Bill C-247, and it is clear the AG recognized the issues that I have discussed so far.

First, the AG found that the integration of service delivery and the sharing of information among departments were limited. Individuals must work with departments separately, which frequently requires them to provide the same information multiple times.

Second, the Auditor General found that there was no government-wide strategy to guide departments on how online services should be delivered and not all departments had developed integrated service delivery strategies that had identified key factors such as cost, benefits, and consideration of client expectations. This has limited the opportunity for the government to identify and move toward cost-effective service delivery alternatives that address the expectations of Canadians.

● (1740)

With regard to the notification of death, the Auditor General found that the federal government did not coordinate information. Page 12 of the report states:

When a death occurs...someone must contact each department separately and follow different processes, as this information is not generally shared and departments do not offer the ability to do this online. This makes it difficult for users who may be trying to stop the payment of certain benefits to prevent overpayments...while trying to apply for others...

The AG also found that the instructions provided on the Service Canada website about what to do for certain life events was not complete. Thus, Canadians following the instructions provided by Service Canada on its website may not do everything that they are required to do. He noted:

—departments are focused on delivering the statutory programs and mandates for which they are accountable. There is no incentive for departments to share information.

I would like to review some of the Conservative government's written priorities.

When the 2014-15 reports on plans and priorities for Employment and Social Development Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat are examined, we will see that Bill C-247 fits into the strategic goals outlined by the federal government.

In the Minister of Employment and Social Development's message, he stated:

ESDC will focus on achieving service excellence for Canadians by further modernizing service delivery, focusing on its core business priorities and increasing the use of technology. Through Service Canada, [the government] will ensure that Canadians quickly receive the benefits to which they are entitled and access to a wide range of programs and services.

On page 61, of the ESDC report, it states:

Service Canada will continue to work with other departments so that Canadians can better access more Government of Canada services through Service Canada.

In the RPP for the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the president's message states:

Canadians need and deserve a public service that is equipped to deliver modern, cost effective and responsive programs and services...we will continue to streamline government operations.

For the period 2014-2017, the report states that the Secretariat will:

—promote client-centred service...efficiency through a whole-of-government approach to service delivery...

With regard to the legislative process, I am hopeful that the bill will receive unanimous support from all parliamentarians to pass second reading and go to committee for review. I would like MPs to hear public servants on how they would implement this bill and whether they feel that one year, as stipulated in the legislation, is enough time to implement the required changes. If they feel that the time frame is too difficult, I am certainly open to a reasonable amendment on what would be an appropriate implementation time frame. As well, the bill would have to be amended to change the ministry named in the legislation, as Bill C-247 was introduced before the name change of the department.

I would also like to hear from departmental officials on what their estimates are of the costs to the federal government for overpayments due to improper death notifications, as well as how much the government currently spends to retrieve benefit overpayments. I am hopeful that this legislation could potentially save the government millions of dollars after its implementation. In the United Kingdom, it is estimated that the "Tell Us Once" service would save the government over \$300 million over ten years.

I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude.

First, I thank the former Liberal member of Parliament for Richmond Hill, Bryon Wilfert. Mr. Wilfert is the original author of this legislation.

Second, I would like to thank the Funeral Service Association of Canada, the Bereavement Ontario Network, Hospice Palliative Care Ontario and Robert Berry from the law firm Miller Thomson for their wonderful letters of support.

This legislation is a non-partisan bill that would create a practical approach to assisting Canadians with their obligations to the Government of Canada. Eighty per cent of care given to ailing seniors is given by their loved ones. Let us help those caregivers who are faced with the obligations of settling loved ones' affairs after they have passed away.

In conclusion, I believe that Canadians expect their governments to make efforts to improve services for citizens. They do not want a system built around individual programs and services, each unique and belonging to its own department. Regulation within the federal bureaucracy must be changed in order to reduce duplication and costs, and free up resources for improved public service delivery. Administrative simplification, new technology and e-government can be powerful vehicles for modernization.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-247 would provide our great country with the opportunity to be a model to the world for service excellence. As parliamentarians, we should want to make that happen.

• (1745)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the thought that the hon. member has put behind this bill. I have one question for him.

Having worked in the health care field, when we had a death in any of the facilities that I worked in, we always had to complete a provincial form. To what degree would this connect with the provincial responsibility in terms of vital statistics and death certificates? Has he given any thought to that sort of interplay between the federal government and the provincial governments?

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, there is an automatic system right now whereby provincial agencies and vital statistics agencies inform Service Canada of a death, except in Saskatchewan or the territories or if he or she was out of Canada. That process does not trigger the responses that are intended by this bill.

However, it is my intention, and I am hopeful, that the bill would speed up the process of better communication even between the federal government and provincial governments. Many provinces already have their own single points of contact within the province. This could accelerate a full nationwide federal-provincial harmonization of the process.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

In our view, his bill is a positive one. On the other hand, it will be difficult for Canadians to believe that the Liberals are going to improve services, given their past history in cutting services and transfer payments when they were in power.

In light of the repercussions on privacy, which certainly will come up in the exchange of information between departments, can my colleague tell us whether the former privacy commissioner was consulted on this bill?

[*English*]

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, I regret her question opened with a partisan comment.

I did not contact specifically the department the member speaks of, but we anticipated the issue. When the first-time contact is made with Service Canada advising it of the death, the form would include a permission from the estate representative to distribute that information to all departments automatically. This issue is important, but exceedingly easy to deal with.

• (1750)

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just recently the government announced some initiatives of harmonizing birth legislation with the provinces as well. This leads into the question that was asked earlier.

Has the member done any research on how this transition has gone with respect to harmonizing when a child is born and bringing in the provincial and the federal government departments into a

single one-stop agency? Could this even lead to more co-operation with the provinces?

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Mr. Speaker, we had not considered that at all because it was not particularly relevant to the legislation. However, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Bereavement Ontario Network for its letter of support. It called this bill a “practical and compassionate attempt to ease the burden for bereaved Canadians during what we know, from extensive experience, can be a very difficult time”.

The Hospice Palliative Care Ontario wrote to me and said:

Compassionate bereavement care and support for caregivers are foundational to the philosophy of hospice palliative care. Bill C-247 will help reduce the stress of grieving families and minimize the bureaucratic process that many now find daunting or overwhelming.

The Funeral Service Association of Canada, which came to the Hill yesterday to support the bill and speak to members about the bill, said:

We believe this bill addresses a non-partisan issue that would serve to reduce red tape for Canadians and ease the process of dealing with the death of a loved one.

Finally, I would like to thank Robert Berry, from the law firm Miller Thomson, who stated in his letter of support a very simple notion: “this is common sense legislation”.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to say at the outset that I appreciate all the thought and effort the hon. member for Guelph has put into the drafting of this particular bill, and those who went before him in terms of starting the thinking around this initiative.

What he is proposing to do in the bill is expand the mandate of Service Canada to include the responsibility of informing all interested government departments and programs about the death of an individual once Service Canada itself has been informed of that death. I think we all understand that the hon. member is trying to do the right thing: finding a way to make things easier for family members when they lose a loved one.

I think it is very important that we know what the existing systems are. I think the House might find it interesting, because as we look at different bills, I think it is important to put them in context in terms of what we currently are doing.

When Service Canada is made aware of a death, it has a process in place to notify the most relevant departments, such as Canada Revenue Agency and Veterans Affairs, and programs such as the CPP and old age security, employment insurance, and Canada student loans. I would like to explain how the existing system works.

To ensure integrity and respect for privacy, Service Canada relies primarily on those who have the constitutional jurisdiction to collect this information in this particular area. That is mainly the vital statistics agencies of the provinces. The registration of births and deaths occurring in Canada is a provincial responsibility. It is these provincial agencies that issue death certificates and therefore are the most authoritative sources.

Private Members' Business

The way it works now is that every day, each vital statistics agency sends Service Canada an electronic list of the people who have died in that province. Service Canada then sends that information along to the interested departments, as I indicated before, especially the Canada Revenue Agency and Veterans Affairs, and programs such as the CPP, old age security, EI, and Canada student loans. It is estimated that about 96% of the deaths occurring in Canada are currently covered by these information-sharing agreements.

This system has been in place for several years. It is reliable, it is secure, and it was designed in a way that protects privacy. Of course, any system can be improved to make it faster and more efficient. The government is always looking at ways to make programs serve Canadians better.

Under the current process, a family member or a person acting for the estate of the deceased does not have to physically visit a Service Canada Centre to report a death. They also do not have to remember to bring along the proper documentation, including the original death certificate, at a time when we understand that they are under significant and considerable stress.

Again, I want to remind my fellow members that Service Canada already gets this information directly from the authoritative provincial sources.

To protect the privacy and the security of Canadians, the government monitors the use of social insurance numbers very carefully and severely limits the federal departments and programs that are authorized to know them.

Before we take steps that would increase this kind of personal information, we need to do a careful analysis of the potential impact of the bill. As we heard, the hon. member from the NDP raised that issue of privacy and security in her questions for the member.

I look forward to hearing the debate on this issue and to working with the member for Guelph on ways we can continue to improve the lives of Canadians.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for allowing me to speak on Bill C-247 introduced by the member for Guelph.

This bill aims at establishing a single point of contact within the government for people acting on behalf of a deceased Canadian citizen or permanent resident, to resolve any outstanding issues.

Of course, we want to make services more accessible and simpler for families who have lost a loved one, because many of them are already under a great deal of emotional and financial stress.

I am very pleased to speak on this bill, because the primary duty of a parliamentarian is to represent his or her constituents in working toward the common good. We must never forget that a society's level of civilization can be measured in the way it treats its weakest members.

Let us take a look at the current situation in light of our own experience. We all know people who have suffered the loss of a

loved one and are on their own in dealing with the government and resolving outstanding issues. I am thinking of an isolated elderly woman in my riding whom I met one day when I was going door to door.

This woman has been a widow for a few months, and she lost her brother quite recently. Her independence is decreasing because she recently had several serious operations, and as her pension is very small she is no longer able to make ends meet. She is 76 years old. We can imagine her feeling of helplessness and her difficulties in trying to deal with all the administrative procedures when she has no one else around her to whom she can turn for support. Now she has to deal with many different officials.

For the Canada Revenue Agency, she must file two final returns, one for her husband and one for her brother. If one of the two had a passport, she will have to contact Citizenship and Immigration Canada to have it cancelled. To cancel any Canada pension plan and old age security benefits, she will have to contact Employment and Social Development Canada. If the person who died was a member of the Canadian Forces or the RCMP, she will also have to contact Veterans Affairs and National Defence or the RCMP.

This 76-year-old woman, who is unable to travel, is on her own in dealing with six federal departments and agencies, let alone the provincial government.

The only way for her to do this is by telephone. In 2013-14, only 64% of calls to Service Canada were handled within the maximum waiting time of three minutes. Once you have managed to get through, however, in most cases, you reach an automated voice messaging service.

Even for people who are active, it is difficult to be served and find your way through the labyrinth of numbers to dial on your telephone as you follow the instructions. We can imagine how difficult it is for an elderly person who sees poorly, hears poorly and has no one close by to help her.

What is the Conservatives' solution to improve the quality of service? The answer is twofold, and it demonstrates how contemptuous this government can be toward the most vulnerable members of our society.

First, because too few calls met the quality criteria, the statistics were bad. The Conservatives, true to form, rather than dealing with the cause, prefer to twist the facts. The quality threshold guaranteed by Service Canada was that 95% of calls were to be handled in three minutes. Well, since the Conservatives were not able to meet this target, they lowered the threshold to 80%.

Second, they found a trick to reduce the volume of calls. They thought it was infallible: you have to contact Service Canada via the Internet. This is a disgrace. How can they imagine telling a senior citizen, someone who helped build our country, perhaps even someone who shed blood to defend it, that now he has to use the Internet.

Private Members' Business

That is the outcome of a disastrous policy that we, the members of the NDP, have condemned ever since it was brought in. This government spends its time demonizing public servants and their ineffectiveness. The current Conservative government has reduced accessible front-line services in every single department.

In 2012 alone, in Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, which has now become Employment and Social Development Canada, the Conservative government announced that there would be a reassessment of the essential nature of the jobs of 1,500 employees. In the meantime, the government changed the name of the department. This government spends taxpayers' money on changing the names of departments and considers that the jobs held by public servants are superfluous expenses.

By 2015-16, the Conservatives will have managed to cut \$243 million from the services provided by Employment and Social Development Canada.

• (1800)

This is a drop of 50% since 2010-11. This government can only say one thing: "cut". The only thing the Conservatives can say to Canadians in need who are asking for help is that they cost too much.

Our seniors do not need Conservative solutions that come straight out of Cracker Jack boxes; they need front-line officers. Our seniors need access to public servants who answer their questions. Our seniors deserve our full care and attention. They need to be able to meet with an officer face to face who will look after their file and help them.

This is the result of one single policy. Rather than strengthening the front line, they lower the quality criteria. Rather than offering services, they cut the public service. Rather than helping people, they tell them to use the Internet. However, the Conservatives are not the only ones responsible for this policy of cutting services.

The Liberals must take their share of the blame. There were the ones who started the cutbacks. When they were in power and had an opportunity to establish the single point of contact that they are proposing today, the Liberals preferred to cut program spending. They cut expenditures by 10% over two years starting in 1995, and over the same period, they cut 45,000 jobs in the public service. How paradoxical it is that this party is now proposing to make public services more accessible.

Even though the Liberals' intention to establish a single point of contact for the government is commendable, who can trust the Liberals? They had 12 years to do it, but instead they chose to cut budgets and staff. The Conservative and Liberal records speak for themselves: Canadians cannot trust either party to provide the services they need. This is why we are supporting this bill, with all due reservations.

On the other hand, when the members of the NDP form the next Government of Canada, we will establish a single point of contact in the government for everything that must be done by someone who has lost a loved one.

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am fairly new around here. It has only been 14 years. This is my 14th spring session, and people get cranky around this time of year. However, it amazes me that, on a bill such as this, the NDP would decide to take the approach that it has, rather than speak to the merits of the bill that would benefit a number of Canadians. If anyone is watching the debate at home, I am thinking it could be framed as juvenile at best.

I want to thank my friend and my colleague the member for Guelph for putting the bill forward. It is a practical bill. It is a common sense approach to something we have all had an opportunity to experience. I myself lost both my parents in the last six years. They lived productive and long lives, but it is a tough time to go through when they are up there in years. I lost my mom just two years ago. I am fortunate that I have two sisters and they looked after a lot of it. They looked after the business around it. Dealing with the estate settlement, closing up the home, and dealing with all that has to be dealt with, it is a real tough time. It is difficult emotionally, and it can be so frustrating to try to wrap up all that is involved. My sister Kim and my sister Darlene took on that responsibility. The brothers were very fortunate that they did step up.

I want to also thank my colleague from Guelph, who put forward the bill, for engaging me early on in the process, so we were able to address any concerns I had early on. We were able to do that early on in the bill, and I like the way it is presented now.

I appreciate the comments from the parliamentary secretary from the government. She has indicated that they are willing to look at this. She brought forward a couple of important points. We certainly do not want to duplicate services, but if we can streamline services and make them more efficient for the operation of government, but also for Canadians, then we are doing our jobs as legislators. Every chance we get to help the government, that is what we try to do over on this side.

The parliamentary secretary also indicated there are a number of processes that take place upon the filing of a death certificate. Provincially, the mechanisms kick in once those processes are initiated. Each individual is a little different. For example, when a veteran passes, it is necessary to make sure the various programs the veteran was engaged in are shut down. My colleague mentioned an EI recipient. If EI or CPP payments continue to be made past the death of an individual, it is tough to pay them back. The government would sooner be notified, so that it can bring that program to a close for that person and not have to go back and try to get money back because of overpayments. There is the passport office and all those issues that were brought up during my colleague's speech.

• (1805)

The funeral industry has continued to improve its services and work with families. It has been helpful, but again, what it can do and how it can provide support can only go so far.

I want to make reference to some comments made by my colleague from Guelph with respect to the Auditor General. I also want to address some comments that were made by the parliamentary secretary with regard to privacy.

Private Members' Business

With respect to the comments made about the Auditor General's report, if any piece of legislation embraces recommendations from an Auditor General's report then it stands a better chance of being good legislation. In the 2013 report on access to online services, the Auditor General outlined deficiencies in how the federal government handles death notifications. In the summary of his report he stated that:

There is limited integrated service delivery among departments....

The federal government does not coordinate other common activities. When a death occurs, for example, someone must contact each department separately and follow different processes, as this information is not generally shared and departments do not offer the ability to do this online.

It is important that we identify that.

With regard to the parliamentary secretary's concern around privacy, this legislation would respect the Privacy Act. I would like to read part of the Auditor General's report, for inclusion in the *Debates*:

We examined whether the four large departments we audited had developed ways to share information while respecting the privacy of individuals' information, in an effort to integrate and improve service delivery. The *Privacy Act* establishes the way government institutions are to collect, use, and disclose personal information in the course of providing services. This Act is not meant to hinder information sharing, but rather to ensure effective protection and management by departments of personal information provided.

The 2004 Treasury Board Secretariat report on serving Canada's veterans noted that Canadians indicated they accepted that government departments should share information, but they noted they wanted to be asked for their consent before this occurs. That is what this legislation is all about. These are Canadian citizens saying they want their information to be shared so that they are able to wrap up their business with the Government of Canada. This speaks to that and outlines it well.

My colleague also mentioned the system now employed in the United Kingdom, Tell Us Once. I am the father of three boys. It would have been a great way to raise three kids, only telling them once. For me, it is more like telling them a thousand times and then they catch on. Tell Us Once is something to which we should aspire. This program has obviously served the U.K. well since its initiation. The fact that it will save \$300 million over 10 years cannot be ignored.

I am pleased that the government has indicated it is interested in getting this legislation to committee to learn more about it and how it could be moved forward. My colleague from Guelph has said he is open to reasonable amendments, and I know he is sincere in that. I hope that, if the NDP sees the merit in this, it would also support it. I hope the government will support this legislation. My colleagues in the Liberal Party look forward to getting this to committee because it would be of benefit to all Canadians.

● (1810)

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by acknowledging the member for Guelph for introducing this well-intentioned private member's bill. I think it is a noble pursuit and I am pleased to speak to it today.

When a loved one passes away, it is hardly a pleasant experience, least of all for the family members who must look after all the details, including the funeral arrangements and the paperwork that

inevitably follows; so the last thing they need is to have to call myriad government departments to inform them of the death of their relative. That is why there is currently a mechanism in place with nine provinces through which Service Canada is notified electronically of all deaths occurring in Canada.

It is estimated that 96% of deaths occurring in Canada are covered by these agreements. When Service Canada receives this information, it discloses it to government departments or programs that have the authority to use social insurance numbers or SINs, as they are more commonly known. Information can be disclosed to the Canada pension plan, old age security, employment insurance, and Canada student loans. The Canada Revenue Agency and Veterans Affairs are also authorized to access this information.

In these cases, agreements and/or authorities are in place to enable the institutions, such as the Canada Border Services Agency, the Department of Justice, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to have access to the social insurance register to validate information on individuals.

Currently, the people responsible for the estate of the deceased person are not required to notify Service Canada. Currently, they do not have to present an original death certificate that Service Canada would have to match against data from the relevant vital statistics agencies, and also currently, the burden is not on family members to present the death certificate in person to one of the Service Canada centres across the country.

Then there is also the question of privacy. Who gets access to this information? Our current approach when it comes to the use of social insurance numbers is to limit the authority to use them to select programs only. Our goal here is to protect the privacy of Canadians.

Service Canada is constantly working with the provinces and SIN-enabled programs in the federal government to improve and expedite the disclosure and exchange of personal information.

Since 1998, the Auditor General has been examining the SIN program and the social insurance register. In reports in 2009 and 2011, the Auditor General recognized the outstanding job the government has done in addressing past concerns about the register. Most notably, the Auditor General praised the agreements the government signed with all 10 provinces to develop electronic links between provincial vital statistics agencies and the social insurance register.

Through these agreements, Service Canada currently receives notices from nine provinces for deaths occurring within their jurisdictions, which are then matched against the social insurance register. This allows for the records of the deceased individuals to be properly identified and prevents the issuing of further benefit payments from federal programs.

Again I thank the member for tabling Bill C-247, and we will continue to examine this piece of legislation.

● (1815)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise for a few moments to speak about Bill C-247. I want to thank the member for Guelph for introducing it. I think it has incredible value.

Private Members' Business

In fact, just a couple of days ago, I spent some time talking on the phone with a woman from Dartmouth whose husband died recently. She was in the midst of going through some of the problems other members have talked about. She was trying to clarify with the Canada pension plan what was going to happen in terms of her pension and whether there were any spousal benefits. It was a serious problem. She told me that she had some family who were working with her. I did what I am sure any member here would do. I told her that if there was anything my office could do, we would certainly help her.

There is no question that it is far too complicated. There is not enough sharing of information. I understand the privacy issues that have been raised, but surely we can overcome those. We could ensure that there is designated staff to provide this kind of information.

It was cited by others that funeral homes are very good at dealing with some of these issues. The funeral home I have had the unfortunate, yet fortunate, opportunity to work with on far too many occasions, White Family Funeral Home, in Kentville, Nova Scotia, is very helpful in terms of helping families who have lost loved ones work through some of these issues.

The bill, as I say, deals with finalizing all outstanding matters between a deceased person and the Government of Canada. The individual acting on behalf of the deceased person may be required to connect with several different departments. We think, of course, of the Canada Revenue Agency, where a final return must be filed for all deceased Canadian residents and citizens. There are several optional returns.

Employment and Social Development Canada is another place where somebody might need to go for termination of the Canada pension plan and old age security benefits.

If the deceased was a veteran or a member of the Canadian Forces, then Veterans Affairs and the Department of National Defence would need to be dealt with. It could be the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Each one of these different areas, depending on a person's circumstances, is a government department a person would have to deal with to clear up the affairs of a deceased person.

I recognize how important the bill is, and I recognize the value of the intent. However, I am concerned about the services that Service Canada personnel are already required to provide and the challenges they have in meeting those responsibilities, whether it is EI or dealing with Veterans Affairs files, or whatever it is. The staff in that department have been reduced. I am finding that people trying to reach Service Canada offices by phone, because we are not able to walk into Service Canada centres anymore and have to reach them by phone or through the Internet, are waiting days, often, to get a reply from a person.

In terms of providing service for people who have filed EI claims, the department says that it will get back to them and resolve the claim in 28 days. That is just a fantasy. That does not happen anymore. It does not happen, because there are not enough people working on these files to deal with the great demand. Waiting times for EI now, for example, are upwards of 40 days.

● (1820)

In Nova Scotia, the Veterans Affairs office in Sydney was recently shut down, one of the eight or nine offices across the country that were shut down, and all the files from that office were sent to the Halifax-Dartmouth area. That is more work put on an already stressed staff, an already depleted staff. The government has taken something in the area of \$243 million out of the budget of Service Canada over the past few years and has cut hundreds of employees from Service Canada.

My point is that I very much support the idea of there being one point of entry, one point of contact, for a family that is trying to clear up these kinds of matters, but I am concerned that unless the government is prepared to assign some resources to get this done, all we will be doing is adding more burdens to an already stressed out and overburdened staff of that particular department. We will be adding more problems to an already difficult situation. That is my point.

We will be supporting the bill. We agree with the intention, but I make those points and I hope they will be received well. There needs to be more specificity in the bill about what departments have to be involved. Right now it just says, "including—but not limited to—" Canada Revenue Agency, old age security, et cetera. However, there are other departments. I have cited a few. I think it should indicate all of the places and all of the services that are necessary to make sure it is all encompassing, because surely we recognize that for many people, the places they need to go differ, but surely we can list that in the bill to make sure it is clear.

However, I would say again to the sponsor of the bill that we need to have a serious discussion with the government about what it will do with resources, what it will do in terms of ensuring that not only money but staff is assigned to departments.

Rather than just seeing the Conservatives agree and lay on more responsibilities without putting in the resources, they will first need to decide how best to deal with the privacy issues and how best to ensure that each department is talking to the others and is sharing that information in a way that makes sense, because it will cost money to get that done. Second, they will have to ensure that Service Canada is supplemented with the necessary resources and the necessary staff for the extra mandate.

I think all members will agree. We all deal, undoubtedly, with the kind of problems the bill is trying to address and recognize. We all need to support it, but it is not enough to say that it is important. We actually have to sit down and make sure that the government commits the resources to make sure that what we commit to actually gets done.

My time has drawn to a close. I want to thank the member for Guelph for introducing the bill and to indicate to him that I will certainly be supporting it as we move forward. We would be more than happy to work with him to try to make it as good and as effective a piece of legislation as it can be.

● (1825)

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address Bill C-247 as proposed by the hon. member for Guelph.

Government Orders

If the bill is adopted, Service Canada would be responsible for notifying all interested departments and programs of the death of an individual once the estate had informed Service Canada. The sensible purpose of this legislation is to increase efficiency and improve service to Canadians, and that intention is laudable.

Let me explain how the current system works.

When a Canadian or a Canadian resident dies, a death certificate is created and issued by these agencies. Service Canada receives this information through agreements with vital statistics agencies in nine provinces. These agreements are called vital events linkages. This ensures that further payments to the deceased from federal programs are stopped. It is estimated that 96% of the deaths occurring in Canada are currently covered by these agreements.

This system has been operating for eight years. It has a track record of integrity, security, and respect for privacy. Service Canada is constantly working with the provinces and with programs that use the social insurance number, or SIN, as we often call it, to improve the disclosure of vital events information.

I want to assure the hon. member that even when deaths occur in jurisdictions that do not have a vital events linkage with Service Canada, they do not go unrecorded. Service Canada receives information on deaths through the administration of the Canada pension plan, the old age security program, the Canada Revenue Agency, Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec, and from survivors of the deceased.

We also have agreements with a number of departments that are authorized by the Government of Canada to use a social insurance number for identification purposes. Other departments and agencies, such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, also have legal authority to validate identity information with the social insurance register.

We have all heard about the plague of identity theft. The SIN may only be collected or used for the purpose expressly permitted by legislation or approved by Treasury Board or the Employment Insurance Commission. The current policy is to limit authorized users of the SIN to key programs only. To protect the privacy of Canadians, not every department or government agency is allowed to have access to the SINs of Canadians.

There is also the issue of reliability of information. The process in place does not require a survivor to physically go to Service Canada. It is a good thing not to force somebody to physically visit a Service Canada centre to tell it about the death of a loved one.

Service Canada is also working with Citizenship and Immigration Canada to determine how Passport Canada could benefit from receiving death notifications from the provinces.

The processes that are already up and running are not only reliable but are also efficient.

I look forward to listening to the second hour of this debate.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and

the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

STRENGTHENING CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC) moved that Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to open debate on third reading on what members across the room and Canadians across the country have concluded is a long overdue updating of a great Canadian institution: citizenship. It is a good bill with a huge number of positive provisions that are going to give better service to permanent residents on their way to citizenship, to citizens themselves, and literally lift up to an even higher level the sense of pride that we all take in our citizenship as Canadians.

I would like to begin by thanking many of my colleagues who have laboured long and hard on this bill. That work began long before I occupied this portfolio. I would like to salute my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Social Development, who really brought this bill, in most respects, to its current stage, along with the parliamentary secretary, who has done fantastic work in committee and in the House, as well as many members of Parliament. The member of Parliament for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country did very important work on the issue of lost Canadians and on citizenship generally. The member for Calgary Northeast tapped in to a particular facet of that pride that Canadians take in their citizenship in introducing measures in this bill that would make sure that gross crimes of disloyalty, when committed by dual nationals, result in the revocation of citizenship.

In the time available to me, I would like to cover four items. I would first like to respond to the critics, those who have misunderstood the bill or disagreed with the bill in one way or another. We are listening. Second, I would like to talk about where this bill takes our citizenship in the 21st century, about what is at the core of the value of Canadian citizenship that is reinforced by this act. Then I would like to remind the House of the main aspects of the bill before concluding with some forward-looking comments about the impact that this renewed pride in citizenship can have on all of us across the country, but above all on young Canadians.

Government Orders

First, I will discuss the questions that have arisen in the media, in the House, and elsewhere about the bill. There have been a few lawyers and a few voices in the House questioning the need to require those applying for citizenship to declare their intent to reside. Subparagraph 3(1)(c)(i) of the bill asks that the applicant be required to intend, if granted, to continue to reside in Canada. Some have misunderstood this provision to mean that anyone applying for citizenship or seeking to meet the requirements of citizenship, which would be four years of residency out of six, must declare an intention to reside in Canada for the rest of their lives. Nothing could be further from the truth and those who have perpetrated this misunderstanding have simply not read the further paragraph, which is (2)(1.1), on page 12 of the bill as I have it printed. It states:

For the purposes of paragraphs (1)(c.1) and 11(1)(d.1), the person's intention must be continuous from the date of his or her application until they have taken the oath of citizenship.

The intention to reside that we are requiring, which we wish had been required in the flawed 1977 version of this bill, relates to the period of physical presence in Canada, residency in Canada, required to become a citizen. That has always been a requirement to become a citizen for 100 years. It was in June 1914 when a five-year residency requirement was formally put in place. That was watered down by the Liberals under Pierre Trudeau in 1977. We think it merits an increase to four out of six years, but with a declaration of intent to fulfill this requirement.

● (1835)

Why is it important that we secure that declaration of intent? It is because, not just in Canada but around the world, many consultants and lawyers have sought to misrepresent this requirement and to argue that residency in Canada did not require a physical presence here, did not require the intent to actually be here. Hence, we have this large backlog of abuse that the RCMP is investigating, which may lead to revocation of citizenship. We need to send a clear message.

Henceforth, with the passage of this bill, residency will mean a physical presence in this country for four years out of six. We will require applicants to declare it over the period from the submission of their application to the day when they take the oath of citizenship.

Let me remind this House, nothing in those provisions constrains the mobility rights of either a permanent resident or a citizen. Someone can have the intent to reside, but then their plans change and they move elsewhere, not fulfilling the residency requirements for citizenship. They do not become a citizen, perhaps until later in their life. After they obtain citizenship, of course Canadians are free to do whatever they want as citizens.

Second, on revocation, it is extraordinary to us on this side, and I think it is extraordinary to Canadians, that so many opposition members would have expended so much breath opposing the revocation of a citizen, only of dual nationals, for crimes like terrorism, treason, taking up arms against the Canadian Forces, or espionage when we already revoke citizenship for much lesser crimes, such as the crime of having concealed a criminal record or having obtained citizenship fraudulently.

We take our responsibilities with regard to revocation extremely seriously. Every one of these cases of revocation involves judicial

oversight, recourse to a court. There is judicial review available explicitly in the bill to every aspect of this bill. If citizenship is to be revoked based on a conviction for terrorism, a file would be prepared for the minister. The minister would review it. The person would be given notice and invited to make written submissions. There is provision for a hearing.

This review does not begin until a court has convicted the person of this crime. I do not need to remind members in this place of how few convictions, fortunately, happily, there are in Canada or of Canadians for these very serious crimes. These additional revocation provisions in this act are well understood by Canadians and well accepted.

With regard to membership in an armed group fighting the Canadian Forces, the minister would not be able to take any action without going to the Federal Court at the very outset, bringing facts and evidence that the Canadian citizen in question had been engaged in armed conflict, and satisfying the court that that was the case. That is the only way to even start this process. If the rules of evidence, or the case, is not strong enough, then it will not make it through the Federal Court and revocation will not take place.

These measures are being undertaken within the framework of our very robust judicial institutions, the rule of law in this country. Everyone should celebrate the fact that they will constitute a very profound deterrent, not just to younger generations, but to all Canadians, and a reminder that allegiance and loyalty to this country require that these grave crimes be avoided at all costs. When they are committed, they will be punished.

These were the two grave weaknesses of the 1977 act: the failure to obtain a declaration of intent to reside from applicants, and the neglect of issues of loyalty and allegiance.

Liberals did not make this mistake in their 1947 Citizenship Act that actually provided for these measures. Conservatives did not make these mistakes in our 1914 Naturalization Act, 100 years ago, which set us on the course toward the strong citizenship we have today.

● (1840)

Certainly our NATO allies, our closest partners in war and peacetime, the other leading democracies of this planet, have not at any time made this mistake. I remind this House there is only one NATO country, according to our analysis, that does not have revocation provisions equal to or more severe than the ones we are proposing in this bill.

Second, where is citizenship today in Canada? What would this bill give us, what would it strengthen for us that perhaps was not there before?

Government Orders

Here the key provision relates to residency, relates to the attachment, the connection, the experience of Canada that we are promoting with this bill, which heretofore newcomers to Canada have actually told us in large numbers was not strong enough. The knowledge test and the language test are part of that, but there is no substitute. All of us have heard from immigrants, newcomers, those looking for jobs, and those who started careers here, and those looking back on what their forebears went through that there is no substitute for direct experience of this country and that four years is a legitimate minimum for what that experience should be.

What happens to permanent residents and future Canadian citizens over those four years? They discover this country. They discover 10 million square kilometres. They discover its diversity. They discover how the rule of law works here. They discover our institutions. They discover why our economy is prosperous, why our agricultural sector is the third-largest in the world, why we have manufacturing and technology burgeoning in all parts of this country, and they find their path into that workforce, which need not just involve natural resources, manufacturing, or agriculture; it could be cultural industries, one of our fastest-growing sectors in this country.

There are old adages about the Trudeau-era standards of citizenship: that citizenship was of convenience, as a former member of this House called it, and that Canada was just a hotel where people checked in and checked out, passport in hand. Richard Gwyn spoke about *The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian*. People could come and live here and benefit from citizenship, but they were not asked to do much more. We have been reminded at every stage of our eight years in government that new Canadians, new citizens, and new immigrants want more. They want to understand the history of this country. They want to understand where the success comes from. They want to belong in that deeper sense, and the value of Canadian citizenship as reinforced by this act would help them to do exactly that.

Third, what are the improvements that we would deliver in this bill?

The first is about service. Because of high immigration of almost 260,000 per year over our eight years in government, the highest sustained levels of immigration in Canadian history, and because of our high rate of naturalization, because people who become immigrants want to become citizens and want to make the extra sacrifice of improving their language skills and mastering the "Discover Canada" guide and taking the test and literally discovering Canada by living here, we do have a backlog. The backlog is a bit larger because of the abuse and the residency fraud that took place that slowed down applications. We had to come to terms with which were legitimate applications and which unfortunately were not. With the measures in this bill and measures undertaken in previous budgets, we have the resources and we would have the decision-making framework to move through that backlog quickly, to take a processing time of two to three years for new applications today down to below two years in the course of next year, 2015, and to under one year by the beginning of 2016.

Second, we are reinforcing the value of citizenship, as I mentioned that the residency requirement would get longer.

● (1845)

Third, we are giving ourselves new tools to ensure that fraud is a thing of the past, if we can possibly make it that in our citizenship programs. We would be much less vulnerable to residency fraud. We would regulate citizenship consultants to ensure they could not lead applicants astray, as we have done with immigration consultants and increasingly with immigration lawyers. We would also raise the potential penalties from \$1,000 to \$100,000, and from one year to five years imprisonment, for the forms of fraud and misrepresentation that unfortunately have been all too common in our citizenship program.

Finally, we would deliver on our commitment across all of our programs to honour those who serve, who wear the uniform of the RCMP and military abroad, and those who work in embassies, as I had the privilege of doing. They would be able to pass on this citizenship beyond the first generation, even if their children were born outside of Canada. New Canadians, permanent residents who are members of the Canadian Forces, would have a slightly faster pathway to citizenship of three years instead of four.

What does our citizenship look like in the 21st century?

There would be less fraud. There would be more penalties. It would be a much more prized citizenship. Because of all these things, we would be properly able to say that Canadians were in a position to promote our citizenship and use it as never before. It would be something that those outside of Canada would seek to acquire with more determination than ever. It would be something that those of us in Canada who have it would seek to use as never before in the world, to do good in our country and in places not so fortunate.

It is our citizenship that lets us undertake the kinds of initiatives our Prime Minister has been undertaking for maternal, child, and newborn health. It is our citizenship that allows us to take action on child, early, and forced marriage. It is our citizenship that lets us be the second most prominent country in the world for refugee resettlement, accepting roughly one in ten refugees resettled every year in co-operation with UNHCR, including those now coming to us in ever greater numbers from Syria.

Our citizenship also lets us work toward building the economy of the 21st century. It was interesting that the OECD report released this week on Canada gave a prominent place to immigration reforms, to the naturalization rate in Canada and the citizenship program, which we consider part and parcel of our immigration programs. Without these kinds of programs, modernized to meet the needs of the 21st century, it would not be possible to match more specialized skills than ever to the needs of a changing economy. It is because of our prosperity that the Canadian economy is changing faster than almost any other.

It was interesting to read that the OECD saw immigration policy as an economic driver and spoke of Canada in relatively glowing terms because of the extent of our immigration reforms over the past year and as a pioneer and innovator in this field.

Government Orders

We have been citizens of our country from day one, from the day we arrived here, and from the day we met the requirements. It is vital for new generations of citizens to see this great institution of citizenship protected and to see where it comes from. It is important to understand what it was in the time of Nouvelle France, or at the time the War of 1812, or for those who stormed Juno Beach on D-Day, or what it was in 1914 on the eve of the Great War.

We will have many occasions to celebrate our citizenship in the next few years in the run up to the 150th anniversary of Confederation. I know all of us on our side look forward to celebrating with all Canadians.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech. Of course, the proposed bill contains some acceptable provisions. However, many others are simply not acceptable.

Let me come back to one of the minister's last comments: that we have been citizens of this country from day one, from the day we arrived here, and from the day we met the requirements. Not too long ago, the minister said in *The Star* that "citizenship is not an inalienable birthright".

I find it very surprising that the minister believes that the right to citizenship can be taken away from a person born here in Canada and that he is putting this idea forward.

In addition, this bill also allows the minister to take away the right to citizenship as he pleases. There are very few criteria. Ministerial discretion comes into play both when citizenship is revoked and when it is granted.

Under what specific circumstances could the minister grant Canadian citizenship unilaterally and in secret? Will he disclose the list of people to whom he has granted citizenship? How will he disclose that information? Why does the minister think it is acceptable for a minister to grant citizenship in secret?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the special conditions for granting citizenship are very clear. The person must have a very hard time acquiring citizenship through the normal process, and there must be a national interest at stake. The conditions are clear and they are in the bill.

Citizenship has never been inalienable. Canadian citizenship was legislated in the House. Canadians born in Canada who have only one citizenship, like myself, have the right to renounce their Canadian citizenship if that is what they wish. It is therefore not inalienable.

Individuals born in Canada who have only one citizenship, not dual citizenship, cannot have their citizenship revoked under the criteria in our bill. However, a person who received citizenship illegitimately by hiding crimes can have it revoked, even before this bill is passed.

• (1855)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the minister first talked about making changes to the

Citizenship Act, he made a point of emphasizing that it was going to be a legislative format and that there were going to be some other changes. One of those changes was a fairly significant jump in the cost of acquiring citizenship, not only in the application fee itself but also in the fees for the requirement of language testing results, IELTS. There would be substantially increased fees for individuals who want to acquire citizenship.

Could the minister explain why those changes were implemented, along with the idea of the knowledge tests? Does he have an opinion on whether a citizen should be expected to know more than someone has been born in Canada and has gone through all of his or her education from nursery school to high school? Should a new citizen have a better understanding of Canada than an individual such as that? I am interested in the minister's thoughts on those three issues.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I hope the member opposite is not implying that our school systems in the various provinces and territories are teaching less over the course of primary and secondary education than the "Discover Canada" guide teaches newcomers to Canada.

Those who have the benefit of going through that school system, whether they are immigrants or not, have great knowledge of Canada. It is equivalent to or greater than what the "Discover Canada" guide represents. The "Discover Canada" guide is a key for those who are new to the country to essential knowledge about Canada that will help them be citizens. It is as simple as that. The success of new Canadians in mastering that material is there for all to see. It is popular, and they are doing well.

On the question of cost, it would go to \$300. We have a responsibility to recover the full cost. We have not been doing that up until now. It would be \$100 for minors. Here is the good news. It is less than half of the U.S. cost. It is less than a fifth of the cost in the U.K., and that cost, under certain conditions, has to be paid annually. Even the cost in New Zealand is 50% more than it is in Canada. In that sense, Canadian citizenship would continue to be an extraordinary bargain.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. minister for bringing this bill before the House. These will be the first comprehensive changes to the Citizenship Act in almost 40 years, and they are much needed.

One thing in the legislation that is of particular importance with the changing dynamic throughout Canada, given the record numbers of immigration at 1.4 million new Canadian citizens since we took government in 2006, is that some have decided to perpetrate fraud on those who seek Canadian citizenship. They are doing so under the guise of being citizenship consultants.

Could the minister elaborate on how, in the legislation, we would go after those who would prey on new Canadians seeking their citizenship?

Government Orders

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for his hard work on this bill.

We will force them to be regulated, as we have done very successfully with immigration consultants. We will also prosecute any and all cases of fraud that lead us to unscrupulous citizenship consultants who may still be out there, with the help of the RCMP and the CBSA if necessary.

This is a smaller citizenship issue than it has been in our much larger and more complicated immigration programs. However, the need for integrity and to enforce the very high standards of behaviour is as strong here on the citizenship side as it is on the immigration side. Citizenship is a privilege that involves immeasurable benefits for Canadians, but it also brings with it responsibilities.

That is why we are absolutely determined to address abuse and fraud. That is why we do not think that terrorism, espionage, treason, and taking up arms against the Canadian Forces are compatible with Canadian citizenship, and we will revoke it for those who have dual nationality. They will have, in effect, withdrawn their allegiance to Canada by these very acts. The principle of allegiance has been an elementary principle behind citizenship. Those who show these gross forms of disloyalty have clearly forfeited their allegiance, and if they are dual nationals, they will forfeit their citizenship as well.

●(1900)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister once again for his speech. Unfortunately, the NDP will not be supporting this bill.

Some parts of the bill are sure to be challenged in court. Unfortunately, I expect that the Supreme Court will once again be called upon to strike down a bill that the Conservative government is forcing Canadians to accept. It is forcing Canadians to use up valuable resources to strike down bills that do not deserve the support of the House.

I just cannot understand why the government always expects the Supreme Court to fix its mistakes. The government is abusing the legal system, and I find it very discouraging that the minister has introduced a bill as badly written as Bill C-24.

There are some very good parts to this bill. For example, it finally addresses the problem of stateless Canadians, lost Canadians. Many of them are people who were involved in the Second World War. In 2007, the Conservatives came up with a bill to fix the problem, but they messed up again because they just do not take the time to draft their bills properly. They had to introduce this bill to fix the mistake they made in 2007.

Fortunately, it seems that the lost Canadians problem will finally be fixed. I should at least thank the minister for that, but the government should have taken its time in 2007 to fix the problem once and for all.

The Conservatives keep talking about how this is the first time in 25 years that there have been major changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Actually, the government has changed immigration laws and regulations several times, without ever solving

the problems. What about the 320,000 people who are still waiting for their applications to be processed so they can become Canadian citizens? That is because of the Conservatives' cuts.

The Department of Citizenship and Immigration does not have sufficient resources to process the applications. The Conservatives are saying that they will speed up the process, but they are the ones who created major delays. It is simply their fault. I would like this government to start learning from its mistakes, to admit them and be accountable for them, instead of always saying that everything is better. We keep going backwards. Every time we take one step forward, we take 12 steps back. According to the Conservatives, we should be celebrating this step forward and hiding the 12 steps back.

The government should admit that it is unable to manage the immigration file. The temporary foreign workers file very clearly shows that the department is out of control, and the minister is responsible for that. He missed his chance to solve the problems. Instead, he is hiding behind blacklists. More and more people are waiting to be admitted to Canada, while the Conservatives keep trying to make us believe that they are solving the problem. Unfortunately, Bill C-24 is their only proposal.

Let us get into the details of Bill C-24. The Conservatives keep saying that they are going to take away the citizenship of individuals who commit immigration fraud, the idea being to deport them from Canada. Are there so many people in Canada who have defrauded the system that we do not have the tools to fix the situation? We already have the Criminal Code, regulations and police forces that are fully capable of going and finding people who defraud Canada's immigration system. With the tools we have, we can crack down on people who commit crimes in Canada, and we can decide whether to deport them from the country. That is already set out. We do not need this bill to solve the problem that the government keeps on raising.

●(1905)

One of the alarming aspects of this bill is the fact that it is a mirage. The Conservatives would have us believe that they are going to solve a problem, when the problem stems from their inability to manage the file. In order to try to solve the problem, the government decided to give the minister additional discretionary powers.

The minister can now decide, based on a balance of probabilities, to revoke the citizenship of a Canadian, without that person having the right to appeal, the right to natural justice or the right to present evidence to a judge. Only the minister, in his little office, with documents in front of him, on a mere balance of probabilities, can revoke an individual's citizenship. It is beyond comprehension why the minister would want such a responsibility, because in our legal system people have the right to be respected. In this case, there is a risk of abusing that right. Once again, why create a situation where rights can be abused?

This bill will probably be challenged in court because it threatens the fundamental right of citizenship. There is nothing more fundamental in a free and democratic society than citizenship. How can the minister sleep at night? Quite frankly, I do not know.

Government Orders

The bill creates new residency criteria. The residency requirement will increase from three to four years. The person must remain and intend to remain in Canada for this entire period.

I would like to point out that the intent to reside is a vague principle that is difficult to prove. I invite the minister to go and see the people at the Canada Revenue Agency and ask them how successful they have been with respect to proof of residency in Canada. It is a very difficult thing to prove.

Under the bill, an individual must show proof of residency for four years. The individual bears the burden of proof. It is up to the applicant to prove this. How do you prove intent to reside? If a person encounters a problem and must return to their country of birth because a family member is ill and needs their help, does he still intend to reside in Canada? How can he prove this intent when he is abroad?

I would not want to see such discretionary items on the minister's table so that he can make decisions based just on a preponderance. We are well aware that the preponderance is in the minister's head and nowhere else. It is up to him to determine whether there is sufficient preponderance of evidence to revoke an individual's citizenship. That is completely unacceptable.

In terms of the bill, frankly, it is high time the government fixed the problem of lost Canadians. I agree with that and I am very pleased that the minister will be able to fix the problem of lost Canadians.

However, as for the other citizens whose citizenship the minister plans to revoke, there may be individuals who have always lived in Canada, who are deported and who find themselves in a country that they are simply not familiar with. I do not think that is very charitable on our part, regardless of the reasons why the minister thinks the person should leave the country.

Once again, if the minister is convinced, on a simple preponderance of evidence, that the person committed fraud to enter Canada, it is not enough.

Since 2008, 25 changes have been made to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, including a moratorium on sponsoring parents and grandparents, fewer family reunifications, punishments for vulnerable refugees and an increase in the number of temporary foreign workers. The Conservatives have made changes to the immigration system that fail to improve the efficiency and fairness of the system.

● (1910)

On the contrary, they created a system that is so rigid that penalties are being imposed that should not be.

Before the Conservatives, Canada was a country that was very welcoming to immigrants. Our country is basically built on immigration. My family is an immigrant family. My ancestors came from England and France. My great-grandparents, who came to Canada from France, would have come here today as refugees. They were Huguenots. That religion was frowned upon in France and they had to flee the country. They came to Canada, a safe haven.

Huguenots were considered terrorists in France at the time, and any who wanted to come to Canada would have been deported. They never would have been granted citizenship based on this government's way of thinking. At the time, we were a welcoming country. We would have let them come settle here. In fact, we did welcome them, and since then, they have built a good family life here in Canada. However, with the criteria set out in the bill before me, these people would never have been accepted. They would have been deported. That is not very welcoming.

The first time I realized that people living outside Canada do not have the same advantages as we do—advantages that we basically take for granted—was during the Prague Spring.

In 1967, Russia overthrew the government of the former Czechoslovakia by means of a military invasion. My family welcomed refugees from that country. Under the rules set out in this bill, those refugees would have been considered terrorists. They would have never been granted Canadian citizenship and they would have been deported.

We are supposed to be a welcoming country that abides by international law. Unfortunately, the bill before us transforms us into exactly the opposite.

The minister also stated, "In cases where citizenship was fraudulently obtained, it can already be revoked."

Let us come back to the matter of people who would never have been found guilty elsewhere. Such individuals would not be considered terrorists in a country where there was a revolution, such as Czechoslovakia or France in the time of the Huguenots. These are simply people who came to Canada in good faith with good will, but who are found guilty because fraud occurred somewhere along the line. This fraud, which was perhaps unintentional, was committed in good faith or bad faith, but regardless, fraud occurred.

The minister himself said that we already have tools to deport people from Canada and strip them of their citizenship. If those tools already exist, I do not know why the government is forcing the House and Canadians to accept Bill C-24.

It would be nice if the government stopped wasting our time and resources, when we could simply be using the existing tools.

In my opinion, the Conservatives just like to play political games. They are not proposing these things because they think there is a need for them, but because they want to talk about their policies and ideology. It gives them the opportunity to be ideological and waste Parliament's and Canadians' resources for purely partisan reasons.

The Conservatives are trying to win more votes in certain ridings; that much is clear. They do not want to improve Canada's immigration system. If they wanted to improve it, 300,000 people would not be waiting for their citizenship applications to be processed. The Conservatives would have taken care of that. In addition, they would not have fired 28,000 federal public servants. Instead, they would have hired more people to process the applications.

Government Orders

●(1915)

The Conservative government keeps doing things backwards. It starts by creating problems and then it finds poorly designed solutions for the problems it created.

I am very discouraged by the fact that this bill was introduced in the House. It was discussed in committee. Some witnesses appeared before the committee. It is worth noting that the BC Civil Liberties Association sent a letter after it testified. On May 23, 2014, the association said the following:

[English]

In my view Bill C-24 will change a core principle of Canadian citizenship—that all Canadians have equal rights.

[Translation]

As was said during question period today, we are creating a two-tier citizenship system in Canada. This bill is creating another class of citizenship, and people could lose their Canadian citizenship, once again, on the mere preponderance of evidence and the minister's say-so. That is not enough, and it is not at all satisfactory that the minister should have such excessive power.

I want to go back to the intent to reside provision. I would like to talk about it again. In her testimony, the director of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic stated that:

...not only is the new intent to reside provision unfair, as it only applies to people who are naturalized citizens, not people who are born in Canada, but it could lead to revocation of citizenship from Canadians who are deemed to have obtained their citizenship status by misrepresenting their intent to reside, even when they may have legitimate reasons to leave Canada, such as for employment reasons or family obligations. As well, this provision is potentially in breach of section 6 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees the mobility rights to all Canadian citizens, both native born and naturalized alike, as well as section 15 of the charter, the equality rights provision.

The file of someone who has to leave Canada unexpectedly could end up on the minister's desk with the apparently preponderant evidence that the person no longer has the intention to reside in Canada. Not only do we need to know whether or not this discretionary power should be given to the minister, we also need to know why we want to open the door to what would clearly be a legal challenge based on the charter.

There also used to be a fund so that people could make charter challenges, but the Conservatives cut off access to that program. Now there will be an additional difficulty: not only will people targeted by this legislation have to go to court to mount a charter challenge, but, if they are not well-off, they will not have enough money to hire a lawyer and make their case in court. Once again, we have two-tiered citizenship. There is one kind of citizenship for those who have money and another kind for those who do not. This is wholly unacceptable in a free and democratic society.

I would like to end by quoting Amnesty International on the subject of revoking citizenship:

...the Supreme Court of Canada said...

"The social compact requires the citizen to obey the laws created by the democratic process. But it does not follow that failure to do so nullifies the citizen's continued membership in the self-governing polity. Indeed, the remedy of imprisonment for a term rather than permanent exile implies our acceptance of continued membership in the social order."

In other words, the Supreme Court of Canada stated quite clearly that punishing somebody by depriving them of their constitutional rights, indeed, by denying them

all constitutional rights and casting them out in the name of the social contract, is not constitutional.

●(1920)

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member's speech. He said that the minister already had the tools to revoke citizenship from dual citizens if they commit fraud. I hope he realizes that the minister is able to do that now.

Is the member defending the status quo and saying that it is acceptable to be able to revoke citizenship from dual citizens if they commit fraud, but not if they commit more serious offences such as terrorism, spying or treason?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his good question.

I want to point out that when I said that the minister had tools at his disposal, I was talking about natural justice. We have a legal process for revoking citizenship from someone in the case of fraud or other types of crimes. My problem with this bill is that there is no process of natural justice. It is a discretionary process. The minister has that discretion and can make decisions as he sees fit. It is up to him to determine whether he is satisfied on a balance of probabilities. This decision should be left to jurists, after all of the interested parties have had a chance to submit evidence. We need a system based on equality, not on inequality.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since January this has been a two-part phase. One is the legislative part, which we are debating now. Another is the implementation of a policy that landed residents now have to have English testing.

I am wondering if the member might want to provide some comments on that requirement.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, it is troubling that there are new language requirements in the bill. I would like to point out that the government does not believe that many in its own employ have to meet those kinds of language requirements. The government does not agree that Supreme Court justices have that kind of language requirement.

We should have some consensus. We should have language requirements in this country that are consistent for everyone. We should not expect immigrants to be held to a higher standard than people in this chamber or the people in high justice situations, such as the Supreme Court. We need to have some fundamental equality here.

If the government stopped cutting programs so that people could actually get that kind of language acquisition, maybe this element would make a little more sense. However, if the government keeps cutting back on all the programs and prospective citizens do not get the training they need, surely they could never respect the language requirements that the bill is presenting.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, QED means what had to be demonstrated. The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles clearly demonstrated that two types of Canadians were being created. There are Canadians and immigrant Canadians.

If we take the example of extreme cases of notorious terrorists or spies, those individuals can be tried in Canada if they are Canadian. However, if they are not native-born Canadians, they will be deported and their citizenship will be revoked. That is wrong. You are either Canadian or you are not. We do not have two systems. I would like to hear what the member has to say about that.

• (1925)

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent question. I would like to point out that the work she does in her riding is second to none. She is probably the best MP the region has had in quite some time. I would like to congratulate her on all the work she is doing.

As for her question, two-tier citizenship is definitely unacceptable. You are either a citizen or you are not.

Canada has constitutional guarantees that all Canadians should benefit from. According to many experts we saw, the bill has created an unacceptable situation in a free and democratic society. The Canadian Bar Association clearly stated that this bill would almost certainly end up before the Supreme Court. It is almost certain that many aspects of this bill will be deemed unconstitutional. Two-tier citizenship is one of those aspects.

It is unfortunate to have to move in that direction. If the bill is challenged in court, I hope that the Supreme Court will deal with this file quickly so that there is more fairness in this country.

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister often compares Canada to other NATO countries. That bothers me because I think that an independent country should do things its own way.

What does my colleague think of the fact that the government is trying to standardize our practices with those of other countries? Does he think that is the right thing to do?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

When we change Canada's laws and regulations to standardize them with those of other countries, we must first verify whether other countries' legislation is consistent with our laws, charters and customs.

The Conservative government is not introducing this bill to improve the immigration system. This is partisan-driven. The government is looking for more voters in the next election. It would have us believe that this bill is militaristic. The government keeps talking about the First World War, the Second World War, and NATO.

The bill is about immigration in 2014. To my knowledge, we are not bringing immigrants into Canada to send them into the army and declare war elsewhere. People come to Canada first and foremost to seek refuge, then to contribute to the Canadian economy, democracy

and the good life we lead. That is what immigration is about. We are welcoming here in Canada.

There is no room for partisanship in bills. Bills should be able to stand alone. Unfortunately, this bill does not stand up at all.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to rise on a point of order, but when I was naming the riding of the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, I used the name of my own riding instead. Would it be possible to correct the record?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that clarification.

We all do our best to represent our ridings. I can guarantee that people living in the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands are very concerned about this bill. Society should continue to be free and democratic. This bill, however, does not comply with the charter. It does not embody the fundamental characteristics of a free and democratic society.

I would not be surprised if the people represented by the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, a name we have heard frequently of late, also want a society based on freedom and democracy. Regardless of which riding we represent, those basic values always matter.

• (1930)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the former minister of immigration has been waiting in great anticipation of what I might have to say, because he knows full well that when I get the opportunity to talk about immigration and citizenship, I like to reflect on not only the current minister but the past minister. I like to take a holistic approach in dealing with the issues as I see them and as many of my Liberal colleagues see them. The government often chooses to use immigration and citizenship in an inappropriate fashion, if I can put it that way, maybe putting politics ahead of what is in the best interest of good, solid, sound immigration and citizenship policy. I would not mind talking a bit about that, being afforded the opportunity to again share my thoughts.

I come to this issue because, over the last 20-plus years, I have had the opportunity of representing in a very real and tangible way a community in Winnipeg North that has allowed me to deal with immigration and citizenship issues, at one time maybe on a weekly basis. That has evolved into dealing with numerous immigration cases on a daily basis. Depending on who we might talk to and depending on the week and the time of the year, it could be anywhere from 200 to 300 or 400 cases.

Government Orders

There is a great deal of satisfaction in working with people and helping them on immigration files and citizenship files. I could provide the House with endless examples that will give an indication of just how off base the government of the day has been in regard to immigration policy. The government has fallen short, not in one or two areas but in a number of areas. I am hoping, by being able to provide direct input to those who are ultimately responsible, both the former minister and the current Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, that they will recognize that they need to start working on behalf of our immigrant community. When I say immigrant community, I am talking about the wider grouping of individuals who live in Canada, call Canada their home, and do so in a very proud fashion.

I was very pleased to have been appointed immigration critic when I was first elected after the general election, and I enjoyed it immensely. When I think of immigration policy, I can say that there has not been that much change in the government's attitude in terms of policy and the direction in which the department is going. This is something that I would like to highlight.

There are so many things I could be talking about. Let me start by commenting specifically on a bill known as "425". Bill C-425 was a private member's bill that was introduced last year by a backbench Conservative member of Parliament. What was that member of Parliament hoping to be able to do through that legislation? He came up with an idea that we should give citizenship out to individuals who have been here for three out of four years. His idea was to allow for military personnel to acquire their citizenship after two years. This is something that was proposed by a Conservative member of Parliament, and it actually received fairly good support from all members of this House. Maybe he did not have the green light from the Prime Minister's Office. The bill passed the House and went into committee, and the arguments that were brought forward at the time were that three out of four years was a good overall policy, that it would work, and that there was nothing wrong with it.

• (1935)

What the member and others around the table were talking about was, in fact, reducing it for certain individuals who decide to serve in the Canadian Forces. I remember the debate well, because I was the critic at the time.

Listening to the comments in this chamber, I did not hear one member—not one Conservative, not one New Democrat, and definitely not one Liberal—make the suggestion that we needed to increase the residency requirement. No one was talking about that, not even the then minister of immigration.

When it came time to provide comment on Bill C-425, what did the then minister of immigration choose to talk about? He chose to talk about the dual citizens. He chose to talk about how important it is to be able to deport or take away citizenship from individuals who commit a crime of treason, and he cited a couple of other things. That was the minister's concern. He not once mentioned that we should be increasing the residency requirement from three years to four years.

Something happened over that late fall from October to November that triggered a thought. I do not know what triggered it, but the thought was to make it more difficult, or increase the requirements,

for someone to achieve citizenship. I question why the government made that decision, because it definitely was not an issue. We know that. If it had been an issue, if MPs or the government were being challenged on the issue, it would have been brought up at the immigration committee. The minister of immigration back then would have raised the issue. However, they chose not to, because it was not an issue then. It is only the current Minister of Citizenship and Immigration who decided this was an issue.

I will put one caveat on that. I suspect that someone within the Prime Minister's Office might have had a say on that issue. Maybe a new minister, being eager and wanting to please the leader, decided he would do that even though there was no need. There was no need. This is what I believe has actually taken place. It is a change that is being dictated from the Prime Minister's Office, which wants to make it four years as opposed to three years, even though it was not an issue. I suggest that is bad policy.

I was not surprised when the government made the decision it would double the cost of the application for citizenship, because it hinted about that in the immigration committee. We could tell by some of the questions Conservatives were asking. We anticipated that the government was considering an increase. That was not a surprise. The surprise was the fact that it wanted to increase the residency period.

An hon. member: Louder.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if the member does not like my volume, he is welcome to leave the chamber.

At the end of the day, we believe that the government has made a bad decision, and the vast majority of the Conservative caucus recognize that. However, of course, there will not be any free vote on this legislation.

What have the Conservatives done in citizenship? They have created a crisis. When they took office, they increased the processing time for a person to acquire the eligibility requirements to apply for citizenship. They rapidly increased the processing time.

• (1940)

When the Conservatives took office, it took roughly a year for a person to acquire the necessary paperwork when applying for his or her citizenship. What is it today? When I say 28 months, I am being very generous. It is likely closer to 30 months. That is for the majority of individuals who put in their applications; I will give the government that much. What does that mean in a very real way? It means, Mr. Speaker, that if you had put in your application today, under the Paul Martin or Jean Chrétien governments you would have had it a year from today. Now we are talking about at least three years, and heaven forbid that a residential background check is required. If that has to be done, we are talking about five years, six years, and even beyond that.

Government Orders

This is the government that created the crisis with processing times. Now what does it say about this legislation? It says it is going to fix the problem. It has a new process and it is going to fix the processing times. It did not require legislation to fix the processing times. It required the political will, and that is what has been lacking with the government. It does not have the political will to improve the processing time; and that does not only apply to citizenship. It has no qualms about processing times for other immigration types of programs. What does it do? It always blames the other government. It constantly does that, and it is just not true.

The minister who had the most significant increase in backlog in the skilled worker program was, in fact, the former minister, the individual sitting across from me right now. When he issued ministerial instructions, he increased the backlog by more than 130,000—I believe that was the number—over a period of weeks. How did the government deal with backlogs? It froze the program of sponsoring parents and grandparents for over three years. It hit the delete button. Imagine deleting 300,000 people who were waiting for years.

The point is that the government has been playing politics when it comes to immigration and citizenship, and it has done a miserable job. It has failed, and I would ultimately argue that it has intentionally failed, because it could have been doing more. The current Minister of Citizenship and Immigration says, “Look at how wonderful we are. We have this legislation and we are developing a new process. Our target is to reduce the processing times from three years to one year, and we will do it by 2016.” This is the government that created the crisis that built it up to three years, and it does not require legislation to get down under a year. That could have been done without legislation.

What will be the real impact on people in our communities—outstanding, wonderful, contributing individuals? What will the real, tangible impact be? Let me tell a couple of stories.

Someone met up with me at my local McDonald's on a Saturday and told me his passport had expired. I will use the example of the Philippines, because this is what in fact happened. The problem is that he has applied for his citizenship, which means he does not have the ability to go to the Philippines after a death in the family. He has now been waiting for well over a year for his citizenship. He asked me if there is anything I can do.

● (1945)

Maybe if there is a two- or three-week period of time and it looks very close to being finalized, a member of Parliament might be able to assist to a certain degree, depending on the situation. However, when there is a waiting period of two and half years, and a person is one year in, and the homeland passport is no longer valid, there is very little one can do when the person needs to get the documents quickly so that they can be there for a funeral or something of that nature.

How many permanent residents do we have in Canada today who have been waiting for their citizenship well beyond a year? We are not talking about a few thousand. We are talking about well over 200,000 people who have been waiting for over a year.

One of the privileges of having Canadian citizenship is having a passport. I do not know if the government is sensitive to that fact, because it is denying Canadian passports, due to its incompetence or its decision to frustrate the system, to tens of thousands of people who should be Canadians today.

Imagine wanting to be a long-distance truck driver obligated to cross the Canada-U.S. border. What do they want? They want valid passports.

What if one wanted to travel to the United States to see friends or travel anywhere outside of Canada? What about getting on a plane? One of the most common pieces of identification asked for is one's Canadian passport.

Why are we making people wait three years? Do not tell me it is because we needed this legislation, because that is a bogus argument. It is not necessary.

Some hon. members: Wrong.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: No, Mr. Speaker, right. Just because there are a number of Conservatives on the other side saying “wrong”, including the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, does not mean that they are right.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. To all hon. members, it is not the practice in the House to refer to members who are here or are not here. I would remind all hon. members of that.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

There is an election taking place today in the province of Ontario. Imagine the tens of thousands of people who should be able to vote today, but because of the Conservative government's incompetence in dealing with the issue, because of the three-year-plus waiting period to get citizenship, they are being denied the opportunity to vote. I speak first-hand about the great sense of pride new Canadians have when it comes time to be able to express themselves by going to the polls and voting, yet what sort of response do we get from the government? It is most unfortunate.

There are many aspects of the legislation the Liberal Party is uncomfortable with. The Liberal Party critic has enunciated a number of flaws. Our expectations are far greater.

I must conclude my remarks by saying that the comments by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration about millions of second-class citizens during the 1970s and 1980s because of a change in government policy backed by Pierre Elliott Trudeau was really a disservice. I suggest that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration apologize for those comments.

However, I am thankful for this opportunity to share a few thoughts.

● (1950)

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be a Canadian citizen, and it is a privilege for me to rise in this House to address this point.

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Women in this country were given their citizenship and the right to vote about 100 years ago. The Chinese did not get their right to vote until 1947. The South Asians did not get their right to citizenship until 1948. Although many Japanese during the internment period were born in Canada, they did not have the right to vote in the 1950s. This was all under the rules of the former Liberal government.

If we had let the Chinese write their laws when we first came to this country in 1421, if I remember properly, we probably would have written them in such a way that one would have to live here a lifetime before being permitted to be a citizen. Under Chinese law, if one parent was from Switzerland and the other from Japan, the children would have to be either Japanese, Swiss, or Chinese and they would have to change their name before they could be citizens.

It is a privilege to be a Canadian citizen. As we define that privilege, I think this current act does a good job. What are we looking for? We are looking for the intent to stay, a commitment to this country, to be grounded in this environment, to pay taxes, and to learn the language so that people can communicate as Canadian citizens. Those are the elements that are necessary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member brings up an interesting point. I suspect that many of those issues would have been resolved when Mr. Trudeau, as prime minister, would have brought in the legislation. I think the Conservatives need to recognize a good thing. We had a better thing in terms of three out of four years versus what is being proposed in this legislation. My gut feeling is that the member who posed the question knows that, because he sat on the immigration committee with me. He will recall that not one member of Parliament, not one presenter, made the suggestion that three out of four years was not good enough. Why did the government make the decision to change it to four years?

I am sure the member has posed that question to himself, because it was a surprise. A tip probably came from the Prime Minister's office.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since my colleague spoke at length about this in his speech, I would like to go back to expedited access to citizenship for persons who are serving in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Of course we support this measure. It makes sense that someone who has served in the armed forces should have faster access to citizenship. That being said, the problem with this measure is that it applies to almost nobody. The simple fact is that to be a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, one must be a Canadian citizen. If one is not a citizen, one cannot join the forces. I did not even know that, but I looked into it and I found out that in some cases, the Chief of the Defence Staff can authorize an individual with the necessary training to serve in a position where there is a skills shortage.

When I asked how many people this would affect, I was told that it was fewer than 10. Currently, fewer than 10 people serving in the armed forces will be able to benefit from this measure.

I would like to know what the member thinks about that. Did the government try to include a measure that looks good on the surface

but that really applies to almost nobody as a way of making the rest of it, which is pretty bad, look better?

• (1955)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question.

If we go to the Canadian Forces website, we see that it says that one has to be a Canadian to apply. The question is why we would allow the residency requirement to be reduced for someone to become a Canadian. There are very few this would actually apply to.

The member is quite right. Generally speaking, there may be individuals outside of Canada who might be recruited by the hierarchy within the military, brought to Canada, and offered something of this nature. There are very few. I had the opportunity to question the military directly on the issue, and I can confirm that it is a very low number.

This goes back to Bill C-425, if that is what the member was trying to get across. It is only meant as a gesture of symbolism to try to give an impression. It is not as if there is going to be a Canadian Forces recruitment banner at the airport as new immigrants come walking in.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member from Winnipeg North talked about the government creating its own crisis relative to this bill. It would be nice if the member could tell us what he really thinks. He is not being very direct.

The member mentioned truck drivers and the need to have a passport. That is a big issue in my own province of Prince Edward Island. Several trucking firms have approached me. They need drivers. We do a lot of international business across the U.S. border. The addition of one year really impacts those individuals.

As well, I wonder if the member could tell me the impact on the economy. The government talks about the economy, but really undermines it in many ways. This is just another way. We do not have the drivers to do the business that drives the economy.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, there is a high demand for long-haul truck drivers. Does it have an impact?

It is closer to three years in terms of the waiting period to get citizenship. A truck driver could be waiting a long time to acquire Canadian citizenship and a passport. It is purely processing time.

I want to pick up on it being a crisis. This is not unique to citizenship. One of the most controversial issues in the House of Commons over the last few months has been the temporary foreign worker program. It is the Conservative government that created the crisis. The Conservatives say that the Liberals did not deal with the issue. The simple answer is that there was no crisis back then. It is the Conservatives that created the crisis. Now they are in a position to try to fix it.

Government Orders

It is no different with the citizenship process or dealing with economic immigrants. The Conservatives come up with weird ways to resolve a crisis. Let us remember what they did with the skilled workers. There were over 300,000 applications, and the previous minister of immigration hit the delete button. He deleted 300,000 applications.

There are court actions and all sorts of problems with it. The Conservative government creates the crisis and then it tries to blame it on someone else. Then it tries to take credit for hopefully fixing it. I do not think there is enough time left in its mandate to rectify the serious problems in the immigration and citizenship file.

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the debate on Bill C-24 and the major changes it makes to the Citizenship Act.

I am pleased to take part in the debate on this bill, which makes significant changes to our Citizenship Act. I am proud to be with the hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who introduced this bill. As the former minister of citizenship and immigration, I worked hard with the public servants at Citizenship and Immigration Canada and with new Canadians to strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship, which is one of the most important things we possess as parliamentarians and citizens. Citizenship unites us and defines us. It is the basis of our values and our shared identity as members of the Canadian family.

When I became the minister of citizenship and immigration in 2008, I quickly learned from new Canadians of all backgrounds because I listened to them. Those new Canadians, from more than 180 countries around the world, came to Canada to start a new life and become Canadians. They were chasing the Canadian dream, freedom and opportunity. As economic immigrants from the four corners of the world, they wanted to benefit from freedom and the rule of law, traditions enshrined in our constitutional and parliamentary system.

The vast majority of those new Canadians shared a sense of Canadian identity and a sense of duty towards this country. They wanted to strengthen that identity. They did not want to pursue diversity for the sake of diversity. They appreciated our country's diversity, yes, but they appreciated the unity of that diversity even more. That is what I learned and heard from new Canadians of all backgrounds.

I also learned that new Canadians are clearly the strongest defenders of the importance of the integrity and value of Canadian citizenship. New Canadians were the ones who brought to my attention some of the terrible situations and fraud networks that seek to abuse our immigration and citizenship system. New Canadians were the ones who informed me of unscrupulous consultants who manufactured evidence of residency in Canada for obtaining citizenship.

New Canadians were the ones who complained to me about new citizens who cannot speak one of our official languages and therefore cannot really be active members of our society. New Canadians were

the ones who told me, with regard to our shared citizenship, that not enough value is placed on the knowledge of our country, its history, its identity and its values.

● (2005)

[*English*]

When I became Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in 2008, by listening with some humility, I hope, to new Canadians from all origins, I learned that their view was that successive Canadian governments had not invested enough importance in protecting the integrity of our shared citizenship.

I learned from these new Canadians about fraud networks organizing fake proof of residency to obtain citizenship and people becoming citizens who did not speak either of our common languages, even at a basic level. They also knew little or nothing about our country's identity, history, and values.

That is why, in 2009, we launched the citizenship action plan to re-establish the value of Canadian citizenship and restore integrity to the process of its acquisition. It was to say that Canada is an open and generous country, but that it will not tolerate those who seek to abuse its generosity. We went systematically through all of the different aspects of the program. We began with combatting citizenship fraud.

I insisted that our officials at CIC focus not just on the quantity of applications processed, but also take seriously the quality of those applications, meaning that they ensure that people actually meet the real legislative requirements contemplated by this Parliament in its adoption of the 1977 Citizenship Act. Specifically, applicants for citizenship first have to demonstrate that they are resident in Canada for at least three out of four years. Second, except for those with severe learning disabilities or those who are older or very young, they have to demonstrate that they can communicate in one of the two official languages. Third, applicants have to demonstrate a basic knowledge of Canada.

What did we find? First of all, in terms of residency, we found that there were consultants out there brazenly selling, as a service to foreign nationals, the fabrication of false evidence of their residency. If members do not believe me, they can go and google it and see online that there are consultants in certain parts of the world who brazenly advertise the value of Canadian citizenship.

To give one regional example, in the Gulf states, a foreign national from a developing country who gets a Canadian passport finds that their salary suddenly increases. There is a commercial value attached to the acquisition of a Canadian passport, but some people do not want to come here and actually live here in order to obtain it. They would rather stay in a tax haven, making a good living while a consultant fabricates fake receipts for rent, financial transactions, and the like. These consultants are handsomely paid.

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I would like to thank and commend members of the Canadian Lebanese community for having brought this issue to my attention. When I learned about it, I insisted that our officials, the Border Services Agency, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police investigate these allegations of fraud, which they did. As a result, to date more than 10,000 cases have been identified of individuals either obtaining citizenship fraudulently or being in the process of doing so. We know that there are many thousands more.

To put this into perspective, it is a relatively small fraction of the overall number of people who obtain citizenship. However, to protect the value of the passport for bona fide citizens, we have to clearly demonstrate serious sanctions and rigour for mala fide applicants of citizenship. They would be the applicants who do not actually live here or who have no connection to Canada.

Similarly, I was disturbed in my early tenure at immigration to encounter a significant number of people who had obtained Canadian citizenship in their adult years, whether they were middle-aged or in young adulthood, but who could not communicate in either English or French. The notion that citizens should be able to speak one of our two languages is not an invention of the government. It is not unique to Canada. It has always been a feature of our citizenship law, ever since the first one was adopted in 1947 by the government of Prime Minister Mackenzie King.

Why? It is because citizenship represents full membership in our political community. It implies participation in our shared civic life. It grants the right of self-government through voting to select one's own government or, indeed, of participating in it by running for public office. One cannot do those things fully if one does not have the ability to communicate with one's fellow citizens.

● (2010)

This is not to denigrate or make a pejorative judgment about those among us in Canada who have limited or no English or French language proficiency, many of whom are wonderful, hard-working people and well intentioned. We honour them and we hope that they will become full members of our civic community. We invest hundreds of millions of dollars to this end. This government has tripled the public spending on settlement services, including free language classes to assist those people in becoming proficient.

By the way, the opposition members always say we should have evidence-based policy. I agree, and that is what this bill is based on. The evidence tells us that language proficiency in English or French is the single most important factor in the economic and social success of newcomers to Canada, bar none. That is not an opinion; that is the cumulative result of virtually every study done in this respect in Canada and around the world.

Language proficiency in English or French in this country is the key that unlocks opportunity. It is the bridge into our full participation in our political and civic community. We do no favours to tell new Canadians that we will ignore it if they do not have even basic competency in English or French. That is analogous to telling high school students that even though they do not pass the grades, even though they are not numerate or literate, we will give them social passes through to grade 12. We all know that does not do them any favour when they get out into the real world; similarly, it does

not do newcomers any favour to tell them that they can become members of a community with which they cannot yet communicate.

It is no coincidence that these words come from the same root. Citizenship is entrance and participation, full membership, in a community, which is obviously implicitly predicated on the ability to communicate. That is why, as part of the citizenship action plan, we defined clear, objective benchmarks for proficiency in English or French for the first time and began testing people. In the past they just had to come in and do a two-minute interview with CIC officials. They would frequently be coached by their immigration consultants on the standard questions. That is how people with no language proficiency in English or French ended up fraudulently, I would say, obtaining our citizenship. It was wrong and it no longer happens.

Then we went about revising our program on knowledge of Canada. That is the third requirement. In the 1977 act and the 1947 act, it is required that people must have a basic knowledge of Canada's values, history, laws, and political system. It is what is called civic literacy.

Again, this is not a reflection of this government or of me alone, but of people across the political spectrum, including many social democrats, many small-l liberals, and many academics and intellectuals. They include people like Jack Granatstein, a prominent Liberal and Canadian historian; people like Andrew Cohen, a prominent small-l liberal professor at Carleton University and author of a book on this subject; people like Rudyard Griffiths, who wrote another book on Canadian identity. All of them, and others, have identified a real challenge in this country with respect to civic literacy, including understanding our political institutions and how they took shape and what our obligations are—not just what our rights are, but also what our responsibilities are as citizens. These things are essential, especially in a country of such diversity, especially in a country that is maintaining one of the highest levels of immigration in the developed world, especially in a country that welcomes a quarter of a million permanent residents every year.

We must be intentional about ensuring that those newcomers who become members of our community through the citizenship process know the country they are joining and understand its laws and its customs. This is why, for example, we were very blunt in the new citizenship guide, *Discover Canada*, which leads to the new and admittedly more rigorous test, in saying that Canada's tolerance and generosity do not extend to certain barbaric cultural practices, including so-called honour crimes, female genital mutilation, spousal violence, et cetera, and that such crimes are condemned and severely punished in Canada".

• (2015)

In Canada, we are generous, we are pluralist, but we believe in certain objective values, such as the equality of men and women, values that are rooted in our history and our identity. That is why we brought in the new test and why we brought in the new study guide. In the old test, which was 20 multiple choice questions, one standard set of questions, unethical ghost immigration consultants got the answer key and actually sold it to applicants for citizenship. Consequently, 98% of those who wrote the citizenship knowledge test were passing, because they just memorized the answer key and because, frankly, the information was so insipid.

Under the citizenship guide called “A Look at Canada”, published by the previous government, there were nearly two pages of information on recycling, but there was not one sentence on Canadian military history. This building was reconstructed in the 1920s partly as a monument to our war dead from the Great War. The Peace Tower houses the names of over 114,000 Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice for our democratic rights. Our citizenship is predicated on those rights, yet new citizens could write the test and become Canadians without ever having heard or read a word about our war dead, about the greatest Canadians.

This government took the position that it was more important for new Canadians to know the meaning of the red poppy than the blue box, more important to know about our military history than such prosaic mundane matters as recycling.

Mr. Joe Preston: The War of 1812.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes, indeed, Mr. Speaker, we even know the role of aboriginals, francophones, and English Canadian militia together defending this country against the American invaders in 1812. Yes, we are proud of those who made sacrifices to create this wonderful experiment in ordered liberty in the northern half of North America. We do not ridicule their role in Canadian history. It is interesting that back in the day, the War of 1812 was considered a Liberal touchstone of Canadian nationalism, but now it is ridiculed by members of the Liberal Party.

We believe in civic literacy. This is not to say that every new citizen should be fluent in English or French or have a Ph.D. in Canadian history, but they should have some basic grasp of knowledge of the country of which they are becoming members. The culmination of all of this is the act that is before us. It is the first major legislative effort to reinforce the value of Canadian citizenship. I know from empirical public opinion research and from my endless anecdotal experience that the vast majority of new Canadians, both citizens and permanent residents, support the strengthening of our citizenship, such as the provision to allow for the deemed revocation of citizenship from convicted terrorists and traitors. Let me say a word about that because it has been a subject of contention here.

Citizenship is predicated on reciprocal loyalty: the loyalty of Canada to the citizen and the loyalty of citizen to the country. Our laws have always permitted a renunciation of that citizenship. American Texas Senator Cruz just renounced his citizenship this week, as an example. Therefore, one can renounce one's citizenship and it can be revoked if it was obtained fraudulently. Every other

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Liberal democracy in the world—save one, Portugal—including the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden say that if someone commits a violent act of disloyalty against his or her country, it constitutes a repudiation of his or her citizenship.

We should not wait for someone to commit an act of violent treason or terrorism against this country to sign a form renouncing his or her citizenship, because he or she has renounced it in his or her violent action. That is what this bill says. By the way, 83% of Canadians polled support the deemed renunciation of citizenship from convicted terrorists or traitors, and a larger majority of those born abroad support it than those born in Canada. This bill is being proposed precisely to support new Canadians and the value of their Canadian passports and to reinvigorate their pride in their shared citizenship. We support them and we invite the opposition to do the same.

• (2020)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the minister. He brought up the issue of terrorists. We know that the definition of terrorist may vary from country to country.

Imagine that someone who opposes the dictatorship regime in China, a country with which we signed a free trade agreement, is accused of being a terrorist and seeks refuge here. Would we let that person come to Canada? I would like the minister to answer that question.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, first of all, fortunately, we do not have a free trade agreement with China. Second, clearly we would allow that person to come to Canada and, after the bill is passed, we will allow bona fide refugees from China who are unfairly persecuted by the Chinese system to come here.

Under the existing Immigration Act, a foreign national who is found guilty of a crime, such as terrorist activity or other serious offences that would also be considered crimes in our country, is not eligible to come to Canada. The same standard exists in the citizenship bill. The existing Citizenship Act clearly states that anyone who commits an offence overseas, such as an act of terrorism, that would also be considered an offence in Canada is inadmissible as a permanent resident or citizen. The key is figuring out whether the crime is actually a crime under Canadian law and not just under Chinese law.

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently, as I often do to my colleague the minister. I have said, to enough people that it probably has made its way back to him at some point, that I actually believe him to be the most rigorous and hard-working minister in the cabinet. In the land of the blind, notwithstanding the fact that I disagree with much of what he says, he is eloquent and very articulate and rigorous in his arguments.

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I know the minister has spent a significant amount of time with Canada's multicultural communities and has worked hard within those communities. I have spent a fair bit of time with those communities as well. When they speak of Pierre Trudeau, Canada's citizenship laws, Canada's identity and multiculturalism, and these policies that have defined a modern Canada, they speak in a very positive way.

Does the minister agree with his successor, the new Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, that the changes made to Canada's Citizenship Act in the 1970s cheapened our citizenship?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kings—Hants for his very kind words. He and I were both elected to this place 17 years ago last week, I believe. We are becoming old veterans of this place. Hard to believe, we were both elected in our twenties. I thank him for those comments. I hope that the comparative remark was not being damned by faint praise.

Objectively speaking, the 1977 Citizenship Act did lower the bar to obtain citizenship quite significantly. At the time, I am sure that it was well intended. However, I honestly believe the consequence of it has been that some people, thankfully a small minority, have consequently taken our citizenship for granted. I refer to that not insignificant number of people who I know obtained or sought to obtain citizenship without living here, as I said before, and without really speaking one of our languages or knowing much about our country.

The bill before us is not radical, is not a change by orders of magnitude. It is more in the order of a change of degree or modification, raising citizenship for residence requirements from three years to four years, for example. It would still be easier to obtain citizenship under the scheme proposed in the bill than in virtually any other country in the world.

We are saying that we should re-establish the value of citizenship. Maybe we went too far in lowering the standard that allowed, regrettably, some small minority to take our citizenship for granted in 1977. Hopefully we can find a consensus on this issue.

• (2025)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the very unfortunate issues that we deal with in constituency offices, and it happens in my constituency office in Newmarket—Aurora, is that people who have been misled by immigration consultants come into the office. It is unfortunate that in many cases they have spent enormous amounts of money attempting to get their citizenship, yet they have been led down the garden path, as it were, and have not had the proper instruction.

My colleague has spent a fair bit of time working on issues related to this problem. Could he comment on how we would regulate immigration consultants?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, one of the things I became aware of as Minister of Immigration was the terrible stories about exploitation by “ghost” or unscrupulous immigration consultants. We brought in a new law that makes it a crime to operate as an unlicensed immigration consultant at any stage during the process of an application. If individuals facilitate an immigration application for consideration, they now must be licensed consultants.

We put in a new regulatory body with much more integrity and much more of a focus on enforcement called the Immigration Consultants Regulatory Council of Canada.

The bill before us seeks to add citizenship consultants to that regulatory framework. Those who sell advice or facilitate applications for citizenship for a fee, for consideration, would now have to be licensed consultants in good standing of a regulatory body designated by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to make sure that there is follow-up. If people are cheated, robbed, or given bad advice, they can make a complaint. Sanctions could be laid and the consultant could lose his ability to pursue that business.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister just talked about people who renounce their citizenship and the possibility to do so. He talked about Google. I have been wondering for some time about the case of a Canadian citizen who committed fraud, was sentenced and spent years in a U. S. prison. He gave up his citizenship to get a British title. My question is very short: what is happening with Conrad Black?

What can the minister tell us about his case?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, clearly, under the Privacy Act, the minister cannot comment on a particular case. That being said, a foreign national who applies for permanent residence is ineligible if he has committed a serious crime. However, there is a review process.

[*English*]

The process is called restoration.

[*Translation*]

This means that a foreign national who was sentenced for a serious crime cannot acquire Canadian citizenship, but the legal procedures for reviewing that sort of decision still apply.

• (2030)

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

I am very pleased with the tone of the debate this evening. I think that this is an important issue. Evidently, everyone here thinks so and sees the importance of our efforts as parliamentarians.

My colleague's question about an exceptional case was quite pertinent because, after all, the minister—we have to recognize this—is speaking with a great deal of experience, and will only point out the positive aspects of this bill, which is not his bill but that of his colleague. His reply to my colleague's question revealed precisely the element of discretion in a decision about a private case, and that is what bothers me the most about this bill.

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I am not an immigration expert, but like all MPs, many cases are brought to my attention and my staff does a good job of handling them. I am the MP for the riding of Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher. Many people choose to settle in this riding when they come to Canada. On many occasions we have to deal with the problem of people who apply for citizenship and then are confronted with a very unwieldy system.

I find it reassuring that the government has decided to address the state of the immigration system and that it has chosen to move forward with legislative reforms because the immigration mechanism seems to be broken and unwieldy today.

In my riding of Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, I see some very serious problems, which have particularly serious consequences for the human beings who come to our offices because they are caught in a process that is literally frozen. These are individuals, families and people who have come from elsewhere to earn a living, to work on a project and quite often to contribute to their adoptive country.

The people who come here have not seen their families in sometimes two, three or four years. They hope that by filling out the right forms and being patient, they may perhaps bring their loved ones closer to them. However, the crisis in the system that handles immigration applications is more serious than ever.

Every day in Longueuil, I hear about men and women who have been waiting for months or years to see their spouses. This situation is the result of the decisions and the policies of our friends opposite, our Conservative friends. It is also the result of budgets that have been reduced while needs have grown. Those decisions have tremendous repercussions on people's lives.

Actually, the processing times beggar belief. In June 2014, to sponsor a spouse or a dependent child, the processing time was 23 months at the Canadian embassy in Beirut, Lebanon. To sponsor a spouse living and waiting in Kenya or South Africa, the wait is 21 months. At our embassy in Senegal, you have to wait 25 months before getting a call back; in New York, it is more than 30 months. More than two years, that is ridiculous!

These are figures, but for the people on the waiting lists, they are not just figures. For the people that I met in Longueuil and those my team met in our offices, these are not just figures. These are real lives. They spend months and years of distress, helplessness, sleepless nights and loneliness worrying about their loved ones. It is their host country that is imposing this on them.

These are the consequences of poor decisions made in Ottawa relating to money invested far from where the needs are the greatest. That is the real problem. However, there is nothing tangible before us today that addresses this specific emergency.

We have seen demonstrations here on Parliament Hill. Take for example the 10,000 people who had filed their applications at the Citizenship and Immigration Canada office in Buffalo, in the US, shortly before the government closed that office. Every one of those applications were redirected, sent from one office to another and lost for more than a year, leaving the applicants worried and apprehensive.

The minister of immigration at the time reacted by calling this huge blunder an effectiveness measure for taxpayers. I kid you not. When a government proves itself unable to run a visa office, it is certainly not a measure of effectiveness for our international reputation.

We know that the challenges are enormous. However, we regret that the government has not been up to the challenges of the immigration file. The resulting chaos has reached proportions that are, frankly, embarrassing and unworthy of a G7 government and a country that would impose quality standards in the provision of services to citizens.

When the cries of those caught up in the mess were heard loudly enough to have a bearing on the Conservatives' electoral prospects, then we finally saw money being thrown at the problem in the 2013 budget. We are talking about \$44 million over two years. Since the money will not go any further, we are in the last year of that spur-of-the-moment cash grab.

● (2035)

In view of the crisis, the government resolved more than once to resolve the problem, but we saw that the situation got worse, not better. We see today that the processing times and the backlog of applications have doubled since the Conservatives came to power. That is really something!

Despite this disastrous situation that has particularly affected many residents of Longueuil, we see that Bill C-24 contains no effective solutions for reducing the bottlenecks in the immigration system, which really seems to have broken down completely.

I would like to focus on what is probably the most appalling and the most worrying aspect of Bill C-24, and that is the across-the-board attribution of powers to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. This is a trend we have seen frequently and in many different forms. The Conservatives prefer to put powers in the hands of ministers and their staff, because it allows them to act without accountability and behind closed doors.

Bill C-24 proposes giving the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration the power to revoke citizenship in certain specific cases. For example, a person who has been convicted on certain grounds, in Canada or abroad, may have his Canadian citizenship revoked, not in a fair and equitable trial in the courts, but by the minister's office. This means that the minister will be asked to make such decisions by himself.

This is also the case when the minister, or his staff, is convinced that a person obtained Canadian citizenship through fraud. While previously these issues were decided by cabinet or the courts, now it is the minister's office that will have the authority to revoke Canadian citizenship on the basis of suspicions. In other words, this is a power that will not be exercised in a fair environment.

We are being asked to trust the Conservatives. Really? We are being asked to close our eyes to the exercise of this discretionary power. I do not think so.

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We are right to ask questions about this procedure. When someone commits a crime, there are consequences and penalties that are applicable to everyone, regardless of ethnic, national or social origin. This is how things happen in Canada, as they do in countries that respect fundamental rights. Our courts are the tools we use to judge illegal acts and impose punitive or dissuasive measures.

The powers that would be granted to the person holding the office of minister of citizenship and Immigration under Bill C-24 are also dangerous because they would allow the minister to base his decision to revoke citizenship on a judicial decision handed down in another country.

For example, let us look at the power of the minister to consider a conviction handed down in another country carrying a prison sentence of five years or more for an offence which, if it had been committed in Canada, would have been classified as a terrorist offence under the Criminal Code. This means that decisions made by Canada would be based on judicial rulings handed down even in a non-democratic country, or in autocratic or totalitarian regimes, or even in states where the justice system is corrupt.

What Bill C-24 proposes is that while most citizens would receive a criminal sentence, others could lose their Canadian citizenship. We are talking about a two-tier citizenship: some fully benefit from the rights associated with being a Canadian citizen, while others have conditional or temporary rights.

This very problematic way of doing things is also reflected in the government's proposal to now require that a citizenship applicant confirm his intention to reside in Canada. That is an unreasonably vague condition, and it puts a heavier burden on applicants. In other words, by obtaining his citizenship under this condition, a new Canadian may have doubts about rights that are usually taken for granted by other Canadians. He can legitimately wonder whether he has the right to travel over long periods of time and whether he can work abroad without getting his citizenship revoked by the government because he did not demonstrate an intent to reside in Canada.

Freedom of movement should be a prerogative of all Canadian citizens, not just those who were born here. The president of the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers talked about an "implicit threat" that will generate a sense of insecurity and worry among people, given that the government may decide to arbitrarily revoke their citizenship if they leave Canada too soon, or if they stay abroad too long.

Since I only have one minute left, I will now talk about our strong feeling that this bill gives too much power to the minister and his office.

We have reasons to find it sad to see a party that keeps boasting about its love for multiculturalism, and whose ministers tour immigrant communities during election campaigns, suddenly turn around and make family reunification harder and Canadian citizenship less accessible.

We, on this side, are convinced that a more humane approach to immigration is needed. We know that immigrants contribute tirelessly not only to our economy, but also to the common good. We know that when family members are allowed to live together,

their lives and health are better, and we make sure they have an integration and support network to better connect with their host community in Canada.

I sincerely hope the Conservatives will take note of our concerns and will acknowledge them, not only in the context of this bill but also in their actions over the year and a half left to the 41st Parliament.

• (2040)

[English]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the focus he has put on Bill C-24, the strengthening Canadian citizenship act, by being present this evening to speak to it and ask questions.

However, the member made reference to the fact that there was not much in the bill to deal with the backlogs. I am sure it was probably an oversight on his part.

I would like to focus his attention on a specific part of the bill that would change the decision-making process for granting citizenship from a three-step process to a one-step process. In effect, this would give officials in the citizenship and immigration stream, who are familiar with cases, the right to grant citizenship, rather than go through the three steps they go through now.

Experts in the field and officials from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration have done the analysis. We estimate that going from a three-step process to a one-step process will reduce the processing time from as high as 30 months to under a year.

Is the member familiar with that, and could he comment on the three-step to one-step process?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, once again, I really appreciate the tone of the questions, and I thank the hon. member for the work he does and for his question.

Of course, I realize that the government wants to speed things up, but the problem is that everyone here represents his or her riding and has the trust of his or her constituents and party leader. This means that every point of view expressed here is relevant, valid and democratic. Incidentally, there are very different ways of doing things, depending on the school of thought. To us, the problem is that while it is much easier to make quick decisions if only a small group is involved in the process, this is of course contrary to the public interest. In the context of the last parliamentary session, it is easy to understand why we do not trust the government.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-24 proposes to amend the Citizenship Act by expanding the age requirements of applicants to 14 to 64 from 18 to 54 for knowledge and language requirements. This shift in age requirement will be problematic for immigrant and refugee children.

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UNICEF has expressed concern in that testing could lead to challenges with reuniting children with their families and could therefore lead to the deprivation of the child's right to family reunification under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also does not take into account the stress that testing may cause or a child's ability to perform successfully in a test environment. These children may also be dealing with a fear of authority or trauma from their home country.

What does my hon. colleague think about this?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that that is an excellent question.

I am going to answer by saying that I had one family that came to my office many times to explain their problems. The members of that family had been ordered to leave the country. They tried to find arguments, to reach another stage and to present new arguments in an attempt to get out of this situation. It was a child who had the responsibility of presenting the arguments. These people had a problem understanding the language and they had a 12-year-old girl at the time. The matter was not settled and they had to leave the country. That young girl was heartbroken because she had this deep feeling of not having succeeded in defending her family.

I thank the hon. member for emphasizing the human aspect of this issue. I certainly agree about the value of Canadian citizenship. It is only natural to want to protect it, but there are lives involved and young people who are affected.

Again, I thank the hon. member for raising this issue.

● (2045)

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate all my NDP colleagues who have spoken to this bill. We are proving that the NDP is reasonable and carefully studies all the issues put before us in order to find ways to improve these bills. Some make their way to committee where, again, our NDP team proposes good amendments. Essentially, these amendments are based on expert opinion and cases that we come across.

A number of my colleagues live in regions with a large population of newcomers or people who are applying to live in Canada and become permanent residents and eventually Canadian citizens.

The teams at their offices deal with a lot of immigration cases. I live in the riding of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, which is in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. It is in northeastern Quebec, two hours from Quebec City. This region is considered remote. However, even in my beautiful region we are very open to others. This did not happen overnight. It took years, even decades to achieve this open-mindedness and it took some special people in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean to make that happen. I am really proud of my region today. This month, the first African grocery store opened in Saguenay. I think that is great. It shows an openness to the world. More and more people are even coming to Saguenay to start their new life. My riding assistants and I see all the administrative and bureaucratic problems that newcomers to Canada have to deal with. It saddens me a bit.

Nonetheless, I am proud to be able to speak to Bill C-24 today and share my view on all this, even though the 10 minutes I have been given will not be enough to cover everything.

Fundamentally, everyone recognizes that Canadian citizenship is of considerable value, but we do not want a politicized approach to this issue. This is unfortunately what the Conservatives are trying to do right now. As I mentioned, we have seen this kind of situation all too often since the Conservative government came to power.

Other parts of the bill also raise concerns. I will try to cover as many of them as I can. For instance, revoking citizenship has given rise to significant legal concerns. We are still worried about the proposals designed to concentrate powers in the hands of the minister. I am disappointed in all the Conservative ministers when they use their power to undermine democracy and give preferential treatment to their own friends.

We would hope that the minister would commit to working in co-operation with us to make real improvements to our immigration legislation, but unfortunately the minister has chosen to put forward a bill that is probably unconstitutional, while the Conservatives on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration turned down all of the amendments put forward in committee. This is not reasonable. The Conservative government thinks that all its bills are perfect and that they cannot benefit from amendments coming from the opposition. Members of the opposition do, however, represent a very large percentage of Canadians, who voted for them, and they represent their respective parts of the country.

I expect the government to show some openness, but unfortunately we see its prejudice instead. This can also be seen in the way it looks at new immigrants and even refugees.

I have my own personal opinion about this. It may perhaps bother some people, but I find that the Conservative government uses new immigrants and cultural communities to broaden its electoral base by promising them heaven and earth. Unfortunately, the government drops them when they are no longer needed, when these voters are not in one of their demographic groups of voters or are not rich enough for them.

● (2050)

We have also seen this in terms of tighter immigration regulations. The new Canadian citizens must have a good chunk of change to be able to settle in Canada, or else they are not the kind of people that the Conservatives want to have in Canada.

I can say that the New Democratic Party supports families and this also includes family reunification. We understand that everywhere in Canada, everywhere in the provinces and even everywhere in the world, not all families are as privileged as the Conservatives opposite and their rich friends. The citizens at home may be sure that the members of the NDP will continue to be fair toward everyone and to show they sincerely care.

Government Orders

I will begin with the first measure that raises concerns. Bill C-24 concentrates new powers in the hands of the minister, including the power to grant or revoke the citizenship to those holding dual citizenship.

The government has a strong tendency to create laws that concentrate power in the hands of its ministers. The NDP condemns this practice. We cannot trust the Conservatives. By granting new powers to a minister, we are exposing ourselves to the real possibility that they will make arbitrary decisions based on political motives. The revocation of citizenship is problematic, since even the idea of giving the minister the power to revoke citizenship raises serious questions. Canadian law already comprises mechanisms to punish people who commit illegal acts. It should not be up to the minister of citizenship and immigration to make these decisions.

Another problem with revoking the citizenship of dual citizens has to do with creating a two-tier citizenship system in which some Canadians could have their citizenship revoked, while others who committed the same offence would be punished through the criminal justice system. The Conservative government is quite good at double standards, and I find that shameful.

Under the provisions of this bill, the minister can revoke citizenship based on certain criteria. The first criterion is whether the minister or an authorized employee is satisfied on a balance of probabilities that the person obtained citizenship by fraud. Up until now, these cases were generally referred to the courts and to cabinet. That will no longer be the case.

This poses some serious problems in that the minister would have the power to revoke an individual's citizenship on the basis of suspicions alone, and no independent tribunal would rule on whether the accusations were true. Unfortunately, some people seeking refugee status in Canada have experienced some degrading and downright shocking interrogations at the hands of officials or other people in positions of authority.

Some people say that if they were to return to their country, their life could be in danger, but the Conservative government and its henchmen insist that their home country is perfectly safe, even though the international media say that this is not the case. Sometimes we hear that the sexual orientation of refugees from extremely homophobic countries is questioned. I have heard some horror stories. I find it very worrisome that the minister could revoke citizenship on the basis of suspicions.

In the United States, for example, the government can file a lawsuit to revoke an individual's naturalization if it was obtained illegally and the individual concealed or falsified relevant facts in the naturalization application process. In such situations, the individual has the right to take the case to court, which I think is reasonable. Any decision can be appealed, and the individual is guaranteed due process.

The second criterion applies to a person convicted under section 47 of the Criminal Code and sentenced to imprisonment for life for treason, high treason or espionage, or a person who was convicted of a terrorism offence as defined in section 2 of the Criminal Code—or an offence outside Canada that, if committed in Canada, would

constitute a terrorism offence as defined in that section—and sentenced to at least five years of imprisonment.

The problem is that this measure makes absolutely no distinction between a terrorism conviction handed down in a democratic country with a credible and reliable justice system and a conviction in an undemocratic regime where the justice system could very well be corrupt or beholden to political interests. This revocation process can be used without the Federal Court ever seeing the file. The measure is retroactive and very problematic.

• (2055)

The third criterion applies to an individual who served as a member of an armed force or an organized armed group engaged in armed conflict with Canada. This revocation process has to go through the Federal Court, which must confirm that the person suspected of these actions really did serve in one of the organizations mentioned while a Canadian citizen. This measure is retroactive.

I would like to talk about the minister's power to grant citizenship, which is also problematic.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Your time is up.

The hon. member for Richmond Hill.

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech and, contrary to the other speakers who have spoken tonight, he has decided to take a more partisan view of the bill and has made some derogatory remarks about members of cabinet and members of the government. He made comments to the effect that they use their power to undermine democracy and give favours to their friends.

Surely this is not the time for any member of the NDP to talk about giving favours to friends, this week in particular, when the Board of Internal Economy has found that the NDP has given a \$1.17 million favour to its friends. I would ask that the member refrain from using that kind of language when debating a bill of this nature. I know that he is a member of Parliament, as we all are here, and he has a role to play in defending his party, but the language he is using is certainly very aggressive.

I would ask the member the same question I asked the previous member. Would going from a three-step process to a one-step process for granting citizenship benefit him and the constituents in his riding?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague asked a number of questions. I will start by answering the first one.

The NDP is pleased to use the parliamentary resources of the House of Commons to inform Canadians about what is happening here in Ottawa, unlike the Conservatives, who prefer to use the resources available to the government, such as the Prime Minister's plane, to send their rich friends and party fundraisers all over Canada at the taxpayers' expense.

Government Orders

Basically, my colleague opposite is saying that my speech is partisan. It is true in the sense that we are having an ideological debate in the House of Commons. It is particularly true with regard to the NDP's vision of immigration and newcomers to Canada.

We believe that our beautiful, multicultural country should open its doors and welcome good candidates for Canadian citizenship with open arms. We should not revoke their rights for arbitrary reasons, which is what the Conservative government wants to do by putting the power in the hands of the minister.

[*English*]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. We have worked together often on health issues.

The interest in promoting the integration of older children into Canada seems to motivate the proposed language amendment. Some research shows that older children who lack capacity in one official language may have difficulty in acquiring one at an older age. This is not a sufficient reason to compromise the convention rights of children. The testing process is not a reliable indicator of a child's ability to become a productive citizen.

Does the member think that the requirement for children ages 14 to 18 to successfully complete both language and knowledge testing should be removed?

• (2100)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my Liberal colleague, who is one of my favourite members, at least on the Liberal side. She does excellent work on every issue she is involved in.

She is absolutely right. Like me, she is passionate about children and their well-being. The work we do in the House of Commons is for the future of the next generation of Canadians, which includes young newcomers.

Although I agree that adult newcomers must show that they are able to speak one of Canada's two official languages—if for no other reason than to improve their integration into Canadian society—I am somewhat bothered by the fact that 14-year-olds will now be required to know one of the official languages when they arrive in Canada.

If their parents are able to speak one of the official languages, but for various reasons, the child has not yet learned to speak French or English, the age of 14 is much too young to require them to do so. If these young people are able to successfully integrate into a Canadian school, I am convinced that they will learn not just one official language, but both and become bilingual.

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am both pleased and proud to rise in the House tonight to once again speak in support of Bill C-24, the strengthening Canadian citizenship act.

The Citizenship Act in its current form has not been updated or reviewed since 1977. It is now almost a generation later, and while

changes have been made to many other pieces of legislation, the Citizenship Act has yet to be addressed. We must ensure that it is relevant and will meet the needs and challenges our citizens and prospective citizens in today's Canada have.

One of the current requirements that I am sure all of us can agree should be enforced is that citizenship should promote attachment to Canada and Canadian values. It should also promote and mandate a responsibility to participate in the life of our communities and our institutions. However, under the current and outdated act, lengthy processing times mean qualified applicants are waiting too long for their citizenship, and the citizenship fees associated do not reflect the full costs.

As I have been saying since this legislation was introduced earlier this year, the measures in the bill represent the first comprehensive reforms to the Citizenship Act in more than a generation. They would ensure that the process reflects the great importance Canadians place on their citizenship, improve the efficiency of the process by which newcomers become Canadian citizens, and deter citizens of convenience.

If implemented, these measures would fulfill a commitment made by our government in the most recent Speech from the Throne and would protect and strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship in four specific ways: by improving processing efficiency in the citizenship program, by reinforcing the value of Canadian citizenship, by strengthening integrity and combatting fraud, and by protecting and promoting Canada's interests and values.

I would like to go into some specifics in each of these areas. As I do so, I will address and try to bring clarity to a number of misconceptions about the bill that have arisen since it was introduced in February.

The measures in Bill C-24 would improve the efficiency of the citizenship program and are the foundation of the initiative we have called the blueprint for citizenship improvements.

Before I go on, I want to quote one of the many witnesses we heard at the citizenship and immigration committee, Ms. Salma Siddiqui, from the Coalition of Progressive Canadian Muslims. This is what Ms. Siddiqui said:

I have heard concerns that Bill C-24 represents a knee-jerk reaction or that it serves a—quote—political process. I disagree. Bill C-24 represents an assertion of the pride we hold in our values of an open, liberal democracy, where our freedoms are applied to all. Ladies and gentlemen, we must be reasonable.

She said this at the meeting on May 14 of this year.

Since 2006, Canada has welcomed an average of more than 250,000 newcomers a year, the highest sustained level of immigration in our country's history. As a result, the demand for citizenship has increased by more than 30%.

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The measures in the blueprint for citizenship improvements in Bill C-24 include a streamlined decision-making model, an improved ability to determine what constitutes a complete application, and a strengthened authority to abandon applications where applicants would not take the steps requested to provide information or appear for a hearing. These measures would improve the process, support ongoing efforts to speed up citizenship processing, and ensure that resources are focused on processing qualified applicants.

In addressing backlogs, there are two quotations I would like to bring to the House's attention. Mr. Warren Creates is an immigration lawyer, and this is what he said:

There'll be a one-step process. It's going to take a year. This is what people want. They want clarity. They want certainty and they want efficiency, and the Canadian taxpayer wants that too.

This was said on *Ottawa Morning* on CBC Radio One on February 10.

● (2105)

Richard Kurland, who is a renowned immigration lawyer in our country, said on Global TV's *Global National*, on February 6, 2014:

The guesswork is taken out of this new system and your processing time will be, relatively speaking, lightning fast.

I urge the members opposite to support the passage of the bill so that it receives royal assent this summer. The passage of the strengthening Canadian citizenship act would significantly reduce the backlog and average processing time for citizenship applications. This is something the opposition has supported in the past, and the responsible thing would be to support it now.

The blueprint for citizenship improvements mandates a new single-step decision-making model, thus improving processing timelines.

However, a misconception has arisen about this efficiency measure. There is a worry that we are moving away from independent decision-makers. I want to reassure my hon. colleagues in this House that this is not the case. In fact, citizenship officers are unfettered, highly qualified decision-makers who are delegated to review and make approximately 100,000 case decisions a year on citizenship matters. Their decision to grant or deny citizenship would continue to be based on the criteria in the law, supported by objective evidence.

The second set of reforms in the strengthening Canadian citizenship act would strengthen the rules around access to Canadian citizenship, ensuring that those rules reflect the true value of Canadian citizenship and that new citizens are better prepared for full participation in Canadian life.

If implemented, Bill C-24 would lengthen the residency requirement from three years to four years in Canada to four of the previous six years before a person could apply for citizenship. It would clarify that residence means physical presence in Canada, which I think is a reasonable expectation Canadians have. It would require adult citizenship applicants to file income tax returns for four years out of the previous six, if required to do so under the Income Tax Act, to be eligible for citizenship, and it would also to require them to make an upfront commitment that they intend to reside in Canada.

Several people have commented on just those provisions, and I would like to point out some of them.

Toronto Sun columnist Simon Kent said, on February 6 in *Straight Talk*, that he thought a lot of people would say that it is a reasonable expectation if one wants to live in Canada. If people want to enjoy living in a free and prosperous country like Canada, they should spend time here and live here and contribute to society. He said that he knows it sounds like something out of politics 101, but that people living here, enjoying the fruits of their labour, paying their taxes, showing that they are committed, and having an extended period of permanent residency from three to four years, and maybe even five, before taking up citizenship is a fair and reasonable proposition.

Gillian Smith, executive director and chief executive officer of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, said:

Our organization works extensively with Canada's newest citizens who tell us that measures taken to foster their attachment and connection to Canada have a positive effect on their successful integration. New citizens' sense of belonging comes in large measure from experiencing Canada first-hand: its people, nature, culture and heritage.

Bal Gupta, a widower, from the Air-India 182 Victims Families Association, endured a tragic experience in his life.

● (2110)

He said:

Well, it's not anything new. When I came to Canada in 1968, at that time the requirement was five years, except that there was a loophole for Commonwealth citizens. For them it was three years. So it is not anything unusual.

Also, many countries around the world have a five-year residency requirement, so it is not unusual to have a requirement of four years. I don't think it is something that's unreasonable.

Reis Pagtakhan, an immigration lawyer, said:

First, I would like to support the proposal to change the residency requirement for citizenship from three out of four to four out of six years. I believe that the longer an individual lives, works, or studies in Canada, the greater connection that person will have to our country.

James Bissett appeared before our committee as an individual. Here is what Mr. Bissett had to say:

I'm also pleased to see that we've extended the wait time by at least one year. I argued in 1977 that we shouldn't have abandoned the five-year wait. I think three years has been too short a period for people to know enough about Canada and our cultural systems to apply for citizenship. I approve of that change, even though it doesn't go quite as far as I might have wanted.

Mr. Bissett was the deputy minister in 1977.

I would like to address the ill-informed argument against some of these measures, which states that the intention to reside provision contravenes mobility rights guaranteed under the charter. In fact, the provision simply signals that citizenship is for those who intend to make Canada their home. Citizenship applicants would be asked as part of the application process whether they intend to reside in Canada. I do not think we would find a Canadian in the country who would say that people can have citizenship even if they do not intend to reside here.

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If applicants indicate that they do not intend to reside in this country, they would not be granted citizenship, as Canadian citizenship means contributing to Canadian life. These requirements are not onerous, and they are in line with those of key partner nations, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.

Nothing about this provision would limit the mobility rights of new citizens. They would be able to leave and return to Canada like any other citizen. In fact, as my hon. colleagues are aware, every government bill presented in the House of Commons is to be examined by the Minister of Justice to ascertain if it is consistent with the purposes or provisions of the charter. Bill C-24, as my hon. colleagues should know, is no exception, and it would not be before the House today in its current form if any such inconsistencies had been found.

The third set of measures in Bill C-24 would help counter citizenship fraud and combat abuse of the citizenship process. Among other reforms, these measures would give the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration the authority to develop regulations to designate a regulatory body whose members would be authorized to act as consultants in citizenship matters. The measures would also substantially increase the penalty for committing citizenship fraud, which has not been increased since 1977; streamline the revocation process; and bar people whose citizenship was revoked before they obtained it fraudulently from reapplying for citizenship for 10 years.

Finally, it would provide the authority to revoke Canadian citizenship from dual citizens who are members of an armed force or organized armed group engaged in armed conflict against our country, Canada, and to deny citizenship to permanent residents involved in the same actions. Dual citizens and permanent residents convicted of terrorism, treason, high treason, or spying offences would be similarly affected, depending on the sentence received in the courts.

These last measures, although they would likely only apply to a small number of individuals, would deliver a very strong and clear message that those who betray our country or take up arms against our armed forces have, in essence, forfeited their right to Canadian citizenship. The opposition parties have criticized our government for this provision. On this side of the House, we are sending a clear message to those who commit serious crimes such as terrorism. Canada's doors are closed and will remain closed to criminals who are undeserving of the rich opportunities that exist with Canadian citizenship.

Any government's priority is the safety and security of its people. The people are who we serve.

● (2115)

We are proud to say these measures are fully in line with our efforts in this regard. This is what Canadians expect and this is what they deserve.

Here is what Shimon Fogel, from the Centre of Israel and Jewish Affairs, had to say about that very issue:

—one of the things that has been percolating is the notion of not just the rights we enjoy but the responsibilities that attach to being a Canadian.

I don't look at this so much as an issue of punishing people by revoking their citizenship as a result of particular undertakings or acts they've committed, but rather

that they are so fundamentally at odds with core Canadian values that there's no rationale or way to reconcile Canadian citizenship with that kind of activity.

Sheryl Saperia, from the Foundation of Defense of Democracy, said:

Bill C-24 suggests that Canadian citizenship, whether bestowed by birthright or naturalization, is predicated on a most basic commitment to the state: that citizens abstain from committing those offences considered most contrary to the national security interests of Canada.

Maureen Basnicki, from the Canadian Coalition Against Terror, Alliance of Canadian Terror Victims Foundation, said:

—yes, terrorism is a global situation. Even though Canada has been fortunate in not having large numbers of Canadians who have been killed by terrorists, we do have them, by the way, from 9/11 and from Air India and many other acts of terror. So we can't disregard that. We do have Canadians who choose to engage in terrorist activities. So if this bill or any such legislation could help deter and help Canada with its statement of intolerance for the most heinous crimes—not to create a hierarchy but it targets innocent civilians—if this can help then I think it's a good thing.

While the package of reforms before us today has been well received by Canadians as reasonable, even overdue, changes to Canada's citizenship laws, the most vocal opponents have been telling.

We have heard the manufactured umbrage of activist immigration lawyers who never miss an opportunity to criticize our government's citizenship and immigration reforms. Their feigned outrage is generally born out of pure self-interest in our opinion and that is the case in this instance.

These activist lawyers, some of them opposition partisans, oppose this change because they are attempting to drum up business by promoting the interests of convicted terrorists and serious criminals over the safety and security of Canadians.

I see the opposition House leader smiling over there. That is a fact, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing to smile about. You should be ashamed to make those kinds of comments—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member for Richmond Hill has been here long enough to know that he is to direct his comments to the Chair and not to other members in the House.

● (2120)

Mr. Costas Menegakis: I should be saying that through you, Mr. Speaker. The opposition House leader should be ashamed of the comments he is making while I am giving my speech. If he does not understand that Canadians do not want terrorists in their communities, around their homes, in their malls, around the schools, then I believe he is in the wrong job. I urge those people to stand with us on the side of Canadians in our great country.

Government Orders

Other misconceptions have arisen over these revocation provisions. For example, some have suggested that these provisions would create a two-class system of citizenship: dual citizens who can have their citizenship revoked and Canadian citizens without another citizenship who cannot. In fact, the reason that these provisions would not be applied to individuals who only have Canadian citizenship is to ensure compliance with Canada's international obligations not to render them stateless.

I can go on and on, but I would like to conclude by saying this. These are necessary improvements to ensure that Canadian citizenship continues to be the envy of the world. Should the bill not be supported by the opposition parties, they are going against measures such as demanding greater attachment to Canada, cracking down on fraud, implementing efforts to effectively deal with the backlog and, importantly, it would mean opposing the option to revoke Canadian citizenship from those who engage in terrorism, espionage, and treason.

Unlike the opposition, our Conservative government is strengthening the value of citizenship by cracking down on fraud, demanding greater attachment to Canada and speeding up processing for eligible applicants. I encourage all of my hon. colleagues to support this very important legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech.

He quoted many people who support the Conservative government. I commend him for having found them. I would like to quote Mr. Fogel of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, who appeared before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on May 5, 2014.

He said:

There doesn't appear to be any safeguard that would preclude a minister from commencing a revocation proceeding for someone who declared intent to reside, but then went abroad to study, work, or tend to an ill relative...

In our view, the problem of potential abuse could be dealt with by requiring the minister to seek a court declaration in cases of misrepresentation of intent to reside, similar to the requirement included for other cases of fraud.

We already have the tools to deal with cases of fraud. Frankly, this bill is electoral opportunism, pure and simple. The Conservative government handles immigration issues with complete incompetence, and the temporary foreign worker program is one example.

The member concluded his speech by saying that they are reducing processing times for citizenship applications. However, 320,000 people are still waiting for their file to be processed. In addition, since the government came to power, application processing times have doubled.

Is this just electioneering, or will the government actually start processing the backlog of immigration applications?

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I want to thank the member for that question, because his preamble to the question was so baseless. He is speaking about election partisanship. This is the way the New Democrats think. That is their mindset. That is why they illegally spent \$1.17 million of taxpayer money to do

mailings in areas that they are not even elected in, to open offices in areas across the country where they do not even have elected members. He has the audacity to stand and say this is somehow electioneering.

We were given a strong mandate by the Canadian people to govern, and that is exactly what we are doing, governing. We are bringing good and important legislation before the House, legislation that Canadians have been waiting for, in this case, for a generation. If the member would read the bill, he would see the answer to the second part of his question. We are going from a three-step process to a one-step process for citizenship applications, which will reduce the backlog to under a year.

He should support the bill and stop those silly, partisan, ridiculous comments from the most benign opposition party that this place and the country have ever seen.

● (2125)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a state party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Could the parliamentary secretary tell me if Bill C-24 puts the best interests of children first? Has he personally reviewed the following articles of the convention, and does the bill meet the rights of the convention? They are article 1, definition of the child; article 3, best interests of the child; article 5, family integrity; article 6, survival and development; article 7, birth and registration; article 8, family relations; article 9, protection from arbitrary separation from parents; and article 10, family reunification.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, anything our government does always has all of our citizens in mind, particularly our children, our most vulnerable citizens in our country.

I am keenly aware of the convention that she has spoken about and the different articles. In this bill, we are actually looking after the best interests of the children. I do not think there is a Canadian who would deny that throwing terrorists out of the country is in the best interest of our children and communities. I do not think there is a Canadian who believes that there is a child 14 to 17 years old who has spent four years in the Canadian education system who cannot speak in one of our two official languages, English or French.

I am keenly aware of the convention and I can tell the hon. member wholeheartedly that the best interests of children are always taken into consideration by our government, as I am sure they are taken into consideration by every member in the House.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the former minister of citizenship and immigration ensured was that there were multiple welcome centres set up for newcomers to Canada to have the opportunity to get instruction in a variety of issues that would help them integrate into the community.

I am very privileged to have a welcome centre in Newmarket—Aurora, which I visit on a regular basis and interact with many newcomers to Canada.

Government Orders

One of the things they appreciate so much at that centre is the value of learning English as a second language. I know we do the same thing in Quebec, where people learn the French language. However, the value is having a language so they can work in the community, can learn to do their banking, and enrol their children in school.

Could the member speak a little about how that integration helps to build into the fabric of our country?

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her hard work and dedication, and the attention she gives to the citizenship and immigration file. I know how important it is to her. The member is also from a very diverse greater Toronto area riding.

I also want to pay tribute to the former minister of citizenship and immigration, current Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, for his leadership on the matters of citizenship and immigration for a great many years now.

In my riding of Richmond Hill, I also have a welcome centre. It is a wonderful facility. It is a great place for new Canadians to go and learn some of the skills they need to better integrate into Canadian society.

The answer to my hon. colleague is that I believe the services provided there are outstanding. I have visited the welcome centre on a number of occasions, as have both ministers, current and former. New Canadians of all ages are getting the skills they need to better integrate into Canadian society, which will ultimately lead to better outcomes for them as they contribute to Canada.

• (2130)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saarnich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. parliamentary secretary has told us tonight that we can trust that Bill C-24 is compliant with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, because it would not be before the House if it had not gone through justice department lawyers, and the fact that it is before us means it is charter compliant.

Could he explain how so many bills passed in the last little while have gone before the courts and been struck down? Is it only a recent practice that the Conservatives are letting justice department lawyers look at the legislation? Will the government please table before us any justice department opinion that is prepared to disagree with a large number of lawyers who have looked at this bill, me included, and looked at the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and are finding the bill, on its face, non-compliant?

The fact that it is before us and the tautology that because it came through the Department of Justice it must be okay is absolutely proven false by the fact that so many bills are being struck down, bills that were passed in this place in a hurry, like Bill C-24.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, although the premise of the member's question is way off, her mathematics are off as well. She said "so many bills".

I wonder if the member could look back to when we formed government in 2006, look at the large number of pieces of legislation that have gone through the House, and then look at the very few, not many, that have had an issue. We are happy to respect what the courts say.

The member is making it sound as if this is an overwhelmingly huge problem. I have every confidence in the Minister of Justice and in the legal professionals who have advised us on this bill prior to bringing it to the House. I am confident that it is charter compliant. I am sure we will see that in fairly short order.

I urge her and everybody else in the House to pass this legislation swiftly. It is good for Canada and it is good for Canadians. Over 83% of Canadians are supportive of the important measures in this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-24. Before I go on, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

As we know, this bill was studied in committee. Unfortunately, even though we proposed good amendments to address the major problems in the bill, the government decided to reject those amendments.

We are concerned about the constitutionality of this bill, and that is a big deal. Immigration is a significant part of our government system, and when the government brings in a bill, the least it can do is ensure that it is constitutional and will not be struck down. Nonetheless, there are some good measures in this bill and we encourage those. Unfortunately, there are also some very worrisome measures as well.

First, during the speech by my colleague from Winnipeg North, I talked about the fact that part of Bill C-425, a private member's bill, was added to this bill. The part that was added has to do with shortening the time requirement for becoming a Canadian citizen for members of the armed forces who are permanent residents.

That is a good measure and we support it. When someone provides a service to society, like a member of the Canadian Armed Forces does, then we can only encourage that. Unfortunately, this good measure probably applies to fewer than three people a year. To become a member of the Canadian Armed Forces you have to be a Canadian citizen unless you have permission from the Chief of the Defence Staff. That only happens when there is truly a shortage in a trade and someone has a specific skill. Then that person can be recruited. It happens very rarely.

When I was preparing my private member's bill, I was told it would affect only 5% of all volunteer firefighters, that that was not enough and that it did not apply to enough people. In this case, the government is bringing in a legislative measure that will apply to three people. I am glad that the government is supporting the Canadian Armed Forces, but it is still troubling to see that the government is implementing good measures that will apply to almost no one.

Government Orders

Now that I have talked about a good measure that applies to few people, I would like to talk about other specific aspects of the bill. What worries me the most is the possibility that the minister can revoke a person's Canadian citizenship in a rather arbitrary manner. There is no court or process, and he decides whether to revoke someone's citizenship. It could be someone who has dual citizenship, because of family ties, for example, and who has actually never set foot in the country where they hold the second citizenship.

It seems to me that this makes no sense and also does not comply with practices. When some other countries apply a similar measure, it is done in accordance with a very comprehensive process. That looks much more like a process where there are detailed explanations of the reasons why it can be done.

There is another measure that I find particularly troubling and that is the fact that people will now have to declare their intent to reside in Canada. If they make this declaration, they will obtain their citizenship, but it could be revoked.

• (2135)

Citizenship could be revoked if the person does not comply with the requirement of remaining in Canada. However, there are special cases. I was thinking of students, for example. Take a young person who obtains his citizenship and who intends to remain in Canada. Then, by a stroke of luck, he is accepted at Harvard or Oxford, which are renowned universities.

It would be very tempting for someone who has an opportunity to go to one of these universities, especially if they were offered a scholarship. His intent to reside is still valid, but he has an opportunity. His intention is not to leave Canada permanently; he simply wants to take advantage of the opportunity he is being given at a certain point in his life. This could give rise to a real sense of insecurity that is truly untenable for people who would have to decide between an extraordinary opportunity and perhaps losing their citizenship.

There is also the example of professional athletes, people who are here in Canada and have dual citizenship. They may have obtained their citizenship when they were young and then become high-performance athletes. If they go abroad to train and are successful at their sport, they could ultimately lose their citizenship because they did not comply with the requirement to reside in Canada, even though they said that they wanted to. In that case, they might be presented with an opportunity that they might not be able to take.

I am also very concerned about another aspect of this bill and that is the fact that it prohibits people who are convicted abroad for crimes punishable in Canada from acquiring citizenship.

We understand that a person who is accused of homosexuality in a foreign country, for example, would not be affected because that is not a crime in Canada. However, many countries have fairly corrupt justice systems. The actual guilt of a person who was accused in a foreign country may be in question. We have to be careful.

This bill does not take into account the fact that the justice systems of many countries are often lacking. The system of evidence is lacking. We may therefore be dealing with people who have been falsely accused or who may have been persecuted at some point.

That is likely why they chose to leave the country that this government would be trying to send them back to.

There are some very worrisome measures in this bill. The government is talking about changing the age for language testing. The fact that the Conservatives are increasing the upper age limit to 64 is fairly reasonable, but the fact that they are lowering the age for children and adolescents is particularly worrisome.

Our immigration system currently has an unbelievable backlog. Some people wait months or even years. They come to see me in a complete panic. They say that nothing is happening with their file. They are wondering what is going on and they ask me to call to find out.

It is completely ridiculous how many people are waiting for their immigration file to be processed. The government's priority should be dealing with these excessive wait times, which make the immigration process more complex. I have seen some unbelievable cases.

• (2140)

The immigration file of one of my constituents was frozen because he did not have a criminal background check for his two-month-old baby.

I believe that there is cause for concern when the immigration system requires paperwork that does not make sense. The government should address many of these problems, decrease wait times and try not to make an already flawed system even more problematic.

[*English*]

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has missed the point of the strengthening Canadian citizenship act, which has been on debate tonight.

What she has said is, in fact, not true. It would only be revoked from dual citizens if the person served as a member of an armed force or organized armed group engaged in an armed conflict with Canada; was convicted of treason, high treason, or spying offences and sentenced to imprisonment for life; or was convicted of a terrorism offence or an equivalent foreign terrorism conviction and sentenced to five years' or more imprisonment. The member is misleading Canadians by suggesting that it is anything less than someone who has indeed compromised our safety in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that this bill contains some very worrisome measures, including the discretionary power being granted to the minister. This measure is very worrisome and the minister cannot deny that. That is what worries me.

This is why this bill should have been drafted differently and the government should have accepted the NDP's amendments to at least ensure that this bill is constitutional.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives chose to stick their heads in the sand, and that is why I am so disappointed in this bill.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the 1970s and the 1980s, millions of people actually received their Canadian citizenship and today they are in fact very proud Canadians. Yesterday, the member was here when the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration stated in the House that the 1977 Citizenship Act actually “cheapened Canadian citizenship”. What he was referring to was the residency requirement in part, which the government now is increasing from three of four years to four of six years.

My question for the member is this. Does she believe that increasing the residency requirement would give more value to the citizenship, or was Mr. Trudeau's change in policy back in 1977 the right direction for us to have been going, as we believe is the case today?

• (2145)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, increasing the residency requirement in no way changes the value of Canadian citizenship.

I believe that people are capable of proving that they belong and that they have a desire to become Canadian citizens after a reasonable period of time. If we have not been able to establish that a person would contribute greatly to Canadian society by becoming a Canadian citizen in four years, I do not know how increasing the residency requirement would change anything.

What is important is that we process these applications within a reasonable amount of time to allow people to build their lives. It is unreal to see how complicated it can be to get Canadian citizenship and to build a life. Many people who earned university degrees in Canada are turned down for jobs because the employer is very concerned that something could happen and the individual would not be able to stay in the country.

It is essential for people to be able to build their lives and become full citizens by exercising their right to vote, among others, and actively participating in their communities. For example, someone could become a municipal councillor in their town to truly get involved.

For this to happen, we need to process applications within a reasonable amount of time and exercise due diligence. If we had an adequate organizational capacity, I am certain that we would be able to assess an individual's case in four years. That seems reasonable to me.

The current residency requirement is reasonable, so I do not see why the government wants so badly to increase it. The system already has massive delays.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are going to take advantage of this opportunity, because the holidays are coming.

I would like to begin by thanking my colleagues for their excellent speeches. The end of the session is fast approaching, and I would like to take a moment to recognize all of the work my colleagues have accomplished over the year.

I would also like to share my thoughts on the bill before us this evening, namely Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. When the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration introduced the bill last winter, he said he wanted to protect the value of Canadian citizenship for those who have citizenship and create a faster, more efficient process for those who are applying for it. I think that everyone here agrees with that basic principle. As legislators, we have a duty to protect the value of our citizenship, and we all recognize that there are measures that must be taken to make the citizenship process faster and more efficient.

While we agree with the objective, I must point out that we have different opinions as to how to reach that objective. I will begin by focusing on the aspects of the bill that must be implemented in order to strengthen the value of our citizenship, while also protecting Canadian citizens.

First, there must be stricter rules for fraudulent immigration consultants. Bill C-24 would give the government the authority to designate a regulatory body whose members would be authorized to act as consultants.

The bill also recognizes that people who sell immigration consultant services are capable of committing an offence. The goal here is to punish fraudsters, not law-abiding immigrants. That is why we are pushing the government to create strict laws to crack down on fraudulent immigration consultants. I also feel that access to citizenship could be expedited for those who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces, since they make a commitment to represent our country and defend our values.

Another positive aspect of this bill relates to conferring citizenship on more lost Canadians. The NDP has taken an interest in this issue since at least 2007. In response to pressure from our party at the time, the government instituted measures in 2009 to confer citizenship on most lost Canadians. However, the changes did not apply to people born before 1947. Bill C-24 closes the loop.

I would also like to express my approval of the harsh penalty for fraud. Bill C-24 significantly increases the fines for fraud from \$1,000 to \$100,000, as well as the maximum prison terms, which will now be from 5 to 14 years depending on the circumstances. This measure will give those contemplating fraud reason to stop and think before committing a crime.

I also support the proposal to institute stricter residency requirements for those seeking citizenship. This measure specifies the number of days during which a person must have been physically present in Canada before applying for citizenship. This clarifies the process and, as immigration lawyer Richard Kurland pointed out, it will simplify things for permanent residents trying to plan their lives. Some parts of this bill will fix problems with the system.

Government Orders

However, other parts of Bill C-24 should be changed. There are many reasons for this. First is the fact that the bill hands too much power over to the minister, including the power to grant citizenship to or revoke it from dual nationals. This measure raises major legal concerns and makes new immigrants vulnerable to arbitrary, politically motivated decisions.

I want to make it clear that Canadian law already includes mechanisms to punish people who commit crimes. It should not be up to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and his department to make these decisions.

Another issue with the power to revoke citizenship for dual nationals is that it will result in two-tiered citizenship. Some Canadians could have their citizenship revoked, while others found guilty of the same offence would be punished under the Criminal Code. I believe that aspect of the bill could face a legal challenge under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically under section 15.

• (2150)

Treating dual citizens differently and exposing them to potential loss of citizenship creates a double standard, which raises some serious constitutional questions. However, section 15 of the charter could not be more clear:

15. (1) Every individual...has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Is the government hoping to once again be scolded by the Supreme Court? How can it consider giving a single person that kind of authority without putting in place a system of checks and balances to avoid abuses? Moreover, why refuse to release the names of the people whose citizenship the minister has revoked or to whom he has secretly granted citizenship?

Until now, such cases were generally referred to the courts and cabinet. It should stay that way. Otherwise, the minister would have the power to revoke citizenship based on suspicion alone, without an independent court ruling on whether or not the accusations are true. On that point, why not follow the lead of the United States, where the government may file a civil suit to revoke an individual's naturalization if it was obtained illegally or if the individual concealed or falsified relevant facts in the naturalization application process? In that situation, the individual in question has the legal right to take the case to court. Every ruling can be appealed, and the individual is guaranteed due process.

That is what should happen in a democratic and egalitarian country like Canada. What is more, the minister can revoke the citizenship of someone who was convicted under section 47 of the Criminal Code and sentenced to imprisonment for life for treason, high treason or espionage or convicted of a terrorism offence as defined in section 2 of the Criminal Code—or an offence outside Canada that, if committed in Canada, would constitute a terrorism offence as defined in that section—and sentenced to at least five years of imprisonment.

At first glance, this measure may seem fair, but what will happen when the person is sentenced in a country with a judicial system that is corrupt or beholden to political interests? For example, Canada

cannot, on the one hand, denounce the elections of a country that it considers to have absolutely no democratic system, but, on the other hand, accept the foundations of its rule of law in order to justify revoking someone's citizenship.

The last point I find troubling is related to what I believe to be the most serious problem with our immigration system: the delays and wait times for processing files, which is completely ridiculous. Despite more than 25 major changes that were made to the methods, rules, laws and regulations concerning immigration since 2008, the Canadian immigration system is still no more efficient than it was and the wait times are getting longer.

Under Conservative rule, there has been a moratorium on sponsoring parents and grandparents, a decline in family reunifications, punishment of vulnerable refugees and an increase in the number of temporary foreign workers to meet the needs of big business. There are currently more than 320,000 people still waiting for their application to be processed, and the usual time it takes is approximately 31 months, compared to 15 months in 2009.

Bill C-24 does not present any real solution to reduce these ever-increasing delays. The bill simply proposes that the processing be simplified by eliminating some intermediaries in the steps towards acquiring citizenship. However, nothing proves that these administrative changes will be sufficient to significantly reduce the wait times.

In light of the concerns I just mentioned, I am opposed to Bill C-24 in its present form. I urge my colleagues to work together to give Canadians and future Canadians what they deserve: a system in which citizenship and immigration are more balanced.

• (2155)

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier tonight, Canada is a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The primary responsibility to ensure that the rights articulated in the convention are implemented in Canada rests with government, both federal and provincial. In 2012, the UN committee on the rights of the child recommended that Canada:

“...ensure the principles of the best interests of the child is appropriately integrated and consistently applied in all legislative, administrative, and judicial proceedings... one approach to ensure children's best interests are given priority consideration...is through the use of...Child Rights Impact Assessments.”

Could the hon. member tell us if the government undertook one, or should the government have undertaken such an assessment with respect to this legislation?

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, the member's arguments are absolutely justified, and we have been hearing them all evening.

Government Orders

I can give an example of something that happened in my riding. Parents were asked to leave and their children had to stay because they were born in Quebec. Families are being separated and it is extremely difficult. Sometimes, the child's rights are not taken into consideration. A parent is deported because their country has become safer than it was, but the child can stay. The father is Canadian, the mother was born elsewhere, and families end up separated.

The interests of the child are not always considered fairly.

• (2200)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for yet another excellent speech that is representative of the extraordinary work she does in her riding.

In her speech, she suggested that the Conservatives are trying to get the Supreme Court to put them in their place. During their speeches today, the Conservatives repeatedly claimed to be making science-based decisions and listening to the people, yet they accepted not one single amendment.

I get the impression that they are trying to make work for lawyers because they know that so many of their bills end up before the Supreme Court only to be torn to pieces.

None of this is based on science. It is all about partisanship and opportunism. That is why I do not think they are listening to anyone. I therefore seek the unanimous consent of the House to move the following motion:

That the House do now adjourn.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, a motion to adjourn the House was just moved. There was unanimous consent to move the motion. As we can see, the motion was not agreed to, so there has to be a vote because there was unanimous consent to move the motion in the House. That changes things. There were two motions. The first motion was for unanimous consent. Some Conservative members said no to the second motion, but the motion was moved in the House, so we have to vote.

• (2205)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I would ask for the advice of the Chair. My understanding is that a request to adjourn was made in the hope of receiving unanimous consent. Then you canvassed the House to see if there was unanimous consent and there was never any canvassing of the House to ask the question. If the answer to the initial request had been yes, then you would have had to put the question to the House. I

understand that you did not put the question to the House, so that is something that still would need to be done. Based on that, I would suggest to you that we have not actually adjourned as of right now.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, I said no and I heard the member for Richmond Hill also say no.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I denied consent as well, quite audibly, and I heard several other members do the same.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, you actually put the question twice. The minister and the member for Newmarket—Aurora are quite right to say that the second motion to actually adjourn the House was denied consent, but the first motion was accepted, which means the question has been put. It overrides Motion No. 10 that was adopted two weeks ago. The motion has been put.

Mr. Speaker, you asked if there was unanimous consent to adopt the motion, which would have adjourned the House. I agree with the member for Newmarket—Aurora that a number of Conservative members of Parliament at that point denied consent to adjourn the House, but the question was put unanimously. No one denied consent to put the question, which means the House now has to be called to vote on that question.

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, there are multiple people on this side of the House who have been sitting here for a considerable length of time listening to the debate, being part of the questions and comments, and speaking as well. We were certainly here when there was a call for unanimous consent. There was no canvass of the House by the Speaker in terms of the request for unanimous consent, so whatever the House leader of the official opposition is suggesting in terms of unanimous consent being granted just simply did not happen in this place. The only way around this, in my opinion, is to have a canvass emanating from the Speaker. As far as I am concerned, it is a very clear ruling that you would have to make.

It only makes sense that there cannot be this many people who would find anything to this. It is astounding to me that the House leader for the opposition would find this to be a realistic situation with all of us present here.

• (2210)

Hon. Jason Kenney: I have a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry. We cannot go to a second point of order. We are on one already.

The House leader of the official opposition had the floor first. I will recognize the Minister of Employment in a minute.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, you quite properly put the question. At that point the House said agreed, which is why you then moved on to the second motion, which is if the House is in agreement with the terms of the motion that the House now adjourn.

Government Orders

It is true, and I completely agree, that a number of members of the Conservative Party have come in and said they did say no to the second motion. That is very true. We all heard that. We admit that. However, the reason you put the second motion, Mr. Speaker, is that the House agreed to the first motion, which now means that the bells need to ring and we need to call in the members to have a vote on the motion to adjourn. We had unanimous consent from the House to call the vote and unanimous consent was denied. I completely agree. Because unanimous consent was denied, we now have to have a vote.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, given the apparent confusion and ambiguity, I just want to say that I have been a member of this place for 17 years, which I think is perhaps the longest tenure of anyone in the chamber right now, with the possible exception of the government whip and the member for Vegreville—Wainwright, and I think I have learned a thing or two about how unanimous consent motions are put. I used to be deputy opposition House leader. I have probably put several dozen unanimous consent motions myself.

When a member moves for unanimous consent that a motion be heard, the formula is for the Speaker to say that the member has sought unanimous consent of the House that the following motion be put. The Speaker then seeks the consent of the House.

I was sitting here, as were several members of the government. I have no recollection of unanimous consent having been sought. The only question I heard was, “on the motion”. I, and several other members of the government, denied consent.

I would submit that unless you can get the blues, at the very least this is a question as to whether the Chair, with respect to Your Honour, properly sought unanimous consent. To be generous to the official opposition, it is at the very best a question of ambiguity, and I would submit, in the absence of clarity on this point, that we continue with the business of the House, because clearly this motion has been put in a dilatory spirit.

• (2215)

The Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. member for Essex rising on the same point?

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, with my earpiece in, I believe I only heard the word “consent”, but said no.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that both sides are agreeing that the Conservatives said no to the second motion, but the reality is that you put the second motion, Mr. Speaker, because the first motion was adopted unanimously.

That is simple. You put the question. The folks who were listening heard it. The folks who were not listening may not have heard it. I am sorry, but in this game we have to be attentive. The reality is that first motion then put the question of adjourning the House to the House and that, of course, negates Motion No. 10, which ties up a whole range of procedural tools from the opposition.

We are now in a situation in which the House needs to be called to vote. It is not a big thing. I do not think any member of the House would object to voting on it. The reality is that because the motion was put unanimously, overriding Motion No. 10, we are now at the point where the members should be called for a vote. We would like to see that vote.

The Deputy Speaker: This process, as I think everybody is appreciating, is a two-step process. What happened was that the initial motion was put, seeking unanimous consent, and requesting in effect that the second motion be put. On that initial request, there were no negatives at all. It was unanimously consented to.

There is no question that on the second—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peter Julian: Please sit down. The Speaker is standing. You cannot interrupt the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. For the purposes of the record in *Hansard*, we will recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, while people have been in here debating this issue, I have had the opportunity to go in and see the record in real time.

In real time, in French, you made the motion. You invited comment. There was one *oui*, and then you proceeded very quickly to the question itself.

In translation, the actual question of “Is there unanimous consent?” did not happen until the same time you were asking the final question for adjournment. As a result, those who were relying on translation of the question “Is there unanimous consent?” said “no” at the time you were taking into account the nays to the motion itself.

In this House, where we wish to allow full participation and reliance on translation, I think it is only fair to allow every member of the House the right to hear the question in his or her official language before being asked to make a decision on it.

• (2220)

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to suspend the House for a few minutes to look at the tape. The government House leader has raised a valid point. My observations are the same as his, and I think it is a valid point that he has raised.

The House will suspend.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 10:22 p.m.)

• (2225)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 10:46 p.m.)

The Deputy Speaker: The House is back in session.

The hon. House leader for the official opposition wants to respond to the point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Chair gave a ruling on the comments we made a few weeks ago regarding section 56.1. That also happened very fast.

The suggestion that the House should consider translation time and actually wait for the translation would really change things for the government, which enjoys launching surprise procedural attacks.

In the history of this House, no caucus has ever had as many Quebec members and Francophone members as the NDP caucus, yet there has been no translation rule of this kind over the last three years.

I am surprised that the government would want the House to wait for the translation, given its regular attempts to launch surprise procedural attacks.

This will really change the way we operate in the House. Nonetheless, we believe the situation is quite clear: the question was put and members did understand it well. A vote now needs to be taken.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: We have looked at the tape. Three of the table staff looked at the tape. The process was the normal process. In fact, there was no speeding of it. I recall myself that I did look down the government side to see if anybody was going to be objecting to the intent, and there no one did, and the tape confirms that. The time sequence is no different from what we have in all the other motions.

I therefore call on the member to present his motion. The debate is over.

The hon. member for Essex on a question of privilege.

* * *

• (2230)

PRIVILEGE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is my privilege to be able to have the service in this House in my language, which is English. My testimony in this House was that I did not hear the words “unanimous consent”. The only word I heard was “consent”. My instinct was to say “no”, and say it twice. That was my intervention before the House leader even came in to make the question about it. I heard in the earpiece the word “consent”. I did not hear it in French. I could not hear what was said there. That is my testimony. I am entitled to wait for the translation to make my point.

The Deputy Speaker: To the member for Essex, if he is going to pursue a question of privilege, he knows that the rules require him to give—

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, he has to raise it at the earliest possible opportunity—

The Deputy Speaker: He has to put it in writing an hour before it is raised in this House.

Order. The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to have regard to Standing Order 48(1), which says:

Whenever any matter of privilege arises, it shall be taken into consideration immediately.

That is what the Standing Order says. That is what you face right now. You have an obligation to hear the hon. member, who feels his

Privilege

privileges have been breached, especially when it affects a proceeding that is before us.

* * *

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I recognize that the question of privilege has been raised in a timely fashion. Written is not required in these circumstances. On the other hand, we have looked at the tapes, the sequence is there, and there is nothing on the tape that indicates there was any negative in opposition to unanimous consent.

I therefore call on the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine to move his motion.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (2305)

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

(Division No. 208)

YEAS

Members

Blanchette	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brousseau
Day	Dionne Labelle
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Julian	Liu
Mai	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Nantel
Péclet	Saganash
Sellah	Toone— 20

NAYS

Members

Adams	Albas
Armstrong	Benoit
Bergen	Bezan
Block	Braid
Brisson	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Calandra	Casey
Daniel	Dechert

Government Orders

Del Mastro	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter	Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Gill	Goldring
Gourde	Grewal
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki	Lamoureux
Leung	Lizon
MacAulay	May
McLeod	Menegakis
Norlock	Obhrai
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Rickford
Saxton	Sopuck
Sweet	Trost
Trottier	Valeriotte
Van Loan	Watson
Wong	Yelich
Zimmer— 63	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

● (2310)

[Translation]

STRENGTHENING CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it will not be easy to come down after that humorous and joyful ride. What an adventure. Tonight, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

I was very pleased to hear that the government was going to amend the Citizenship Act. I thought that something was finally going to get done. I thought that the Conservatives were likely going to reduce processing times, which would be good for everyone—for MPs and for the people who are waiting for citizenship. We are trying to help them, but the files are not moving forward. They have stalled. However, after having read the bill, I realized that that was not the case at all.

The first time, the minister responsible for temporary foreign workers tried to reduce processing times, but he made a mistake. He deleted 280,000 people who were waiting for citizenship from the waiting list. That is how he fixed the processing times: he hit delete.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives cut \$179 million from the department's budget, including \$23 million from the Immigration and Refugee Board, just to reduce processing times. After that brilliant idea for speeding up processing times, we now have 320,000 people waiting. The Conservatives work hard, but they work in reverse.

Then they wondered what to do with those 320,000 files. It made no sense, and nothing was happening. Someone had the brilliant idea

of giving the minister the authority to grant citizenship. They took the stack of 320,000 files to the minister's office. That way, the minister can decide who should get citizenship and who should not. Of course, it is all very hush-hush because the Conservatives like secrets. I would not be surprised if they have their own little committee with the Liberals, called "United in Deceit". Yes, they meet in secret, musing, plotting, slinging mud. There was no lack of deceit from them this week.

I would address the issue of processing times from a different perspective. In four to five days, a Mexican family that I know will be deported after waiting four years for their file to be processed. We went down every conceivable political and legal avenue to get things moving. I personally met with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on several occasions to expedite the process, because these people were getting death threats in their country, yet they will still be deported in three to four days. I will not say when exactly, as doing so may put them in danger.

The bill we have before us mentions the importance of citizenship and of integrating in the host country's culture. The minister spoke of the importance of Canadian values and of integrating in the host country's culture. These people lived here for four years. In that time, they learned French and found work. The wife started a business and the kids are doing great at school. It seems to me they have integrated fine and embrace our values. However, they will still be deported. Why?

I sifted through the minister's comments to try to understand the situation. Why are these people from Mexico being deported? Why are they not being given the opportunity to apply for permanent resident status? The government is aware of the situation in Mexico.

The minister says that "our immigration and asylum system reforms have already yielded very positive results for taxpayers and refugees alike". I do not see why he has to bring taxpayers into this. Then, he says that "in 2013 alone, thanks to our reforms, asylum claims from safe countries dropped by a whopping 87%".

● (2315)

During the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act reform, the government created lists. It created a list of designated countries. They are safe countries that do not produce refugees. It also created a list of countries that are not as safe that are not on the list.

The problem with the Zamudios and exiled Mexican families is that returning to their country would be dangerous because the drug war is relentless and they could be killed. Unfortunately for the Zamudios, Mexico is not on the list of dangerous countries. However, to date, the drug war has claimed 80,000 victims. Everywhere else, we would call that a civil war, but when it comes to a country with which we have an agreement called NAFTA, we cannot start talking about civil war and calling that country dangerous. No, it is our trade partner. The truth is that the Government of Mexico has lost control. It can no longer assure the safety of its citizens, not only in the north, but in all regions of Mexico.

This list should not exist, and we will work to ensure that we have a receiving process for refugees and immigrants that has some compassion. That is what is missing: compassion.

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In Mexico, 70% of municipalities are infiltrated by drug cartels. As I just said, there have been 80,000 deaths. The situation is so serious that in many villages citizens get together and organize into self-defence groups to fight drug traffickers. The basis of the decision in the Zamudio family case to expedite their deportation, as explained by the minister, is that the cartel who threatened—

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been listening to the honourable member for a few minutes, and his remarks are not relevant to Bill C-24, which is about reforming the Citizenship Act. It has nothing to do with the subject of his speech, the asylum system.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, if we are to discuss amending the Citizenship Act and making “consequential amendments to other Acts”, I think that it includes waiting times both for immigrants and for refugees.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The minister is correct in the sense that there is a rule of relevance in this place, but I think all hon. members are familiar with the practice that a significant amount of leeway is given to people in terms of context and examples.

Consequently, I will give the floor back to the hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord to complete his speech.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, I will continue talking about deportation. What does this government have against Mexicans who want to become Canadian citizens? I have had a list of five or six families in the past four years who have been threatened by drug traffickers and who were deported.

We do nothing. We do not keep those families that want to integrate, become good citizens and work. I know that the minister prefers to bring in Mexicans to work in the fields, temporary workers, and then send them back. He is okay with this policy.

However, what help does the government provide to Mexicans who flee from difficult situations and who want to become good Canadian citizens? The Reyes Mendez family was deported in 2013, the Seguras in 2014, the Picazo family in 2011, not to mention the Pavon-Aguila family.

I will come back to the basis of the decision. Since he did not want to let me speak, I will continue on this topic. What was submitted in court by the department was that the head of the cartel, El Mas Loco, who was threatening the family in the Michoacán region, was killed in 2010. The military had announced that it had killed this leader. Oddly enough, in the March 9, 2014 edition of the Associated Press, the army said that this same leader had just been assassinated. The family was told that it was no longer in danger in Mexico because the leader had been killed based on the 2010 statement by the military. Now the Mexican police is saying that it killed him in 2014. We have reliable information. These people are leaving in four or five days. They could lose their lives. I am holding the current Minister of Employment and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration personally responsible. If something happens to these children or these people, they will be held personally responsible.

● (2320)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I found the hon. member's speech strange.

First, the New Democrats are always saying that they want more time to debate bills, but they just moved a motion and forced a vote with the sole purpose of delaying proceedings and avoiding debating a bill. Then, we just heard a speech from the member that had nothing to do with the bill. He did not even mention the subject in question, which is the reform of the Citizenship Act. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which manages the asylum system, is something completely different.

I am going to ask two questions. First, does the member agree with the 63% of Canadian immigrants who indicated in an Angus Reid poll that they support the section of the bill that seeks to revoke the citizenship of people who are found guilty of terrorism or treason?

Second, does he not agree that the asylum system is the responsibility of the independent, quasi-judicial tribunal, judges, and courts, not politicians?

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, the minister knows full well that when it comes to terrorism, we have our court system and all the mechanisms needed to prosecute these people and find them guilty in Canada. We do not need to give a minister sitting in his office more powers.

What I would like to say tonight about my speech is that I also took the opportunity to plead with the Conservative ministers regarding the Zamudio family, who are going to be deported in three or four days.

Can you show some compassion and expedite this file in order to offer them refugee protection on humanitarian grounds?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will single out one aspect of the legislation that is very important to recognize, and that is the area where we have seen exceptional growth in the processing times for people who want to become citizens.

Back in the days of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, one could anticipate a wait of about 12 months. Today that waiting period is now closer to two and a half to three years. That is only as long as that individual does not have to go through the residential calculator. If that happens, then we are talking about four or five years, or more, in processing times. Now the government is saying that the legislation would do a lot in reducing the processing times.

Does the member believe, as we believe in the Liberal Party, that the processing time could have been dealt with in an earlier and more prompt fashion by providing adequate resources that would have allowed processing times to be far more reasonable, shooting for that one-year mark?

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• (2325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the tone of my colleague's question, which is a change. I think he heard my message tonight, and that is good.

The objective of the bill is to reduce the processing time from three years to one year. Those are good intentions. However, the government is also cutting \$119 million from human resources at Citizenship and Immigration.

Maybe the minister will put in some overtime in his office to decide himself who will get citizenship, but I do not think that this will work.

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise a second time to speak to this bill, and I will start by saying that this bill is yet another example of the Conservative ideology. There is no need to worry. I can back up what I am saying.

The Conservative ideology is not just the party line or the party's policies. It is also about how they act and how they view society. Since the Conservatives took power—since they got a majority—the House has passed a number of measures, and we have seen a moratorium on sponsorship for parents and grandparents and a decrease in the number of family reunifications, which appears to be a concept that the Conservatives have essentially scrapped, not to mention the punishment of vulnerable refugees.

I remember that one of the very first speeches I made in the House after I was elected was on Bill C-4, which would have enabled government officials to imprison children. The Conservative ideology is not just the party line. This bill would also put children in jail. The Conservative ideology can once again be found in this bill.

The bill does not deal at all with the issue of backlogs. Come to think of it, how did the Conservatives handle that problem? As my colleague explained, they told the 280,000 people who had been waiting to get their Canadian citizenship that they should pack up their bags and go away, then come back some other time and take their place in line.

That is how the Conservatives decided to deal with the backlog. We obviously should not expect the bill to address the problem then, since they already took care of it.

A number of people from my riding have been in my office, feeling desperate because they have been waiting for months, or even years, for their children or parents to be allowed into Canada. Some have been waiting for over two years, which, let me tell you, is very distressing for Canadians. The backlog issue is really not a priority for the Conservatives, let me assure you.

The bill would give the minister the authority to grant or revoke citizenship. A number of my colleagues have already spoken to that. In fact, the bill would create a two-tiered citizenship, something the Conservative government does not find troublesome at all.

The Conservatives spend their time driving a wedge between urban and rural Canadians or between regular and seasonal workers. We all know their style of governance. Nothing that I say will come

as a surprise. Everything they do revolves around dividing people and keeping them in the dark to better govern. That is the Conservative ideology. Every time they introduce a new policy in the House they attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of Canadians.

This bill creates two classes of citizens, those who are Canadian citizens and those who are dual citizens or who may have been born abroad.

We are creating a double standard where two people guilty of the same offence may get very different sentences. One of those people could wind up in jail while the other, found guilty of having committed the same offence, would lose their Canadian citizenship and maybe even be deported. One never knows with the Conservatives.

We already have the means to punish criminals who have broken the law, means that are beyond the control of the government and the executive branch. There is no need to give the minister the power to personally decide who is guilty and who is not.

• (2330)

What is even more ridiculous is that they do not even abide by the courts' criteria, such as proving an accused's guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt", the burden of proof, or "reasonable and probable grounds to believe". The minister gives himself the right to revoke a person's citizenship on the basis of mere suspicion, without allowing an independent court to review his decision. I must say, out of respect for people who are fighting against a dictatorship in their country, that the Conservatives' intentions are obvious. They want to give themselves all the powers and decide the fate of Canadians.

In his speech, the minister said that the Canadian citizenship was held in high regard before 1977. He even talked about World War II. He wants to bring us back to before 1977, and perhaps even to just after World War II. I knew this was a backward-thinking government, but it is beyond comprehension. They want to take us back to 1950. Now, this is another illustration of the Conservative ideology.

Things have changed since the end of World War II. This is 2014 and the government wants to take us back to before 1977, as the minister said in his speech. Revoking the Canadian citizenship is a huge step backwards on many fronts. I will talk about the constitutionality of this kind of measure, and of this kind of power, which a minister can definitely not give himself. Indeed, according to the Supreme Court of Canada, this is unconstitutional. I am aware of the Conservatives' contempt for our democratic institutions. We know how they have been treating Parliament since they got a majority. They imposed time allocation 70 times. Therefore, they may criticize our motion today, but nobody believes what they are saying.

The Supreme Court was clear about the fact that stripping a person of citizenship is unconstitutional. I would like to read an excerpt from a Supreme Court decision:

The social compact requires the citizen to obey the laws created by the democratic process. But it does not follow that failure to do so nullifies the citizen's continued membership in the self-governing polity. Indeed, the remedy of imprisonment for a term rather than permanent exile implies our acceptance of continued membership in the social order.

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Professor Macklin explained:

In other words, the Supreme Court of Canada stated quite clearly that punishing somebody by depriving them of their constitutional rights, indeed, by denying them all constitutional rights and casting them out in the name of the social contract, is not constitutional.

I clearly recall the first time I spoke in the House about this bill. The minister told me that citizenship existed long before the Supreme Court and that the court did not, in any case, have the right to contradict him. Just as an aside, I understand how disdainful the Conservatives are toward our democracy and the nation's highest institution, but it has been stated quite clearly that revoking someone's citizenship is unconstitutional.

Once again, the Conservatives are going to talk to us about the beauty of Canadian citizenship and our Canadian society, but unfortunately, they will then continue to express contempt for the highest institutions that make this country a democracy and a haven for newcomers. If the Conservatives love their society so much and are so attached to Canadian citizenship, why are they not even able to respect the human rights of Canadians and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

• (2335)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to begin, I would like to correct some of the misinformation we heard in that last speech.

First, the hon. member stated that there is a moratorium on the sponsorship of parents and grandparents. There is no such moratorium—quite the opposite. When I was minister, the government increased the number of family reunifications, and the number of parents and grandparents who came as permanent residents went from 17,000 to 25,000, a 60% increase. She also said that the number of family reunifications went down when it actually went up. The figures are there in black and white on the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website.

The member said that the bill before us will create two classes of citizens: those with multiple or dual citizenship and those with only Canadian citizenship. That is incorrect. The current law contains that same distinction because we clearly have the authority to revoke citizenship if it has been obtained fraudulently. However, we can only do that for people with dual citizenship because we have obligations under the Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons.

[*English*]

Is the member suggesting that Canada should violate the international convention on stateless persons?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the minister. I want to point out that I never said that the NDP supported people who commit immigration fraud.

I remember hearing one of the minister's colleagues talking about someone who had made a false statement and who had forgotten to fill out some of the boxes on his application. In the end, it was discovered that he had committed fraud. These people cannot come to Canada if they do not even fill out their application properly. We

agree on that. The information that the Conservatives are giving Canadians is false. They are giving Canadians false information.

On that note, I would like to add that Amnesty International, the Canadian Council for Refugees and the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers are opposed to this bill and think it is unconstitutional. What more do the Conservatives want? Does this need to be taken before the Supreme Court? It will be and they will be chastised. That is how the Conservatives work. They are trampling on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Fortunately, the highest court in this country prevents them from getting too big for their britches and brings them back down to earth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 11:38 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Monday, June 9, 2014, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 16, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I think that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 12 midnight.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

• (2340)

AGRICULTURAL GROWTH ACT

The House resumed from May 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts relating to agriculture and agri-food, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

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Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to speak to Bill C-18, though the government did not have the courtesy to actually tell us which bill it was bringing forward. New Democrats always plan in advance, so each one of us has all the bills with us and ready to go for the speech itself—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, could you please get some order in the House?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. It has been a long day. There are 20 more minutes to go.

The hon. opposition House leader.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I think the government is a little sore. It has lost two rulings today, and I think it feels just a little badly.

Before I begin, Mr. Speaker, could you please let me know the time allocation I have for this particular speech?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member has 20 minutes, with about 19 remaining.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, on December 9, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tabled Bill C-18, the agricultural growth act.

Bill C-18 is another Conservative omnibus bill, making changes to nine different pieces of legislation, some of which we support, and others that pose significant concerns. Unlike the government's everything but the kitchen sink omnibus budget bills—and we have certainly seen omnibus budgets with everything thrown in together—in Bill C-18, perhaps following the good advice that the NDP has provided, changes actually all relate to agriculture. For once, we actually have an omnibus bill where all the provisions are related.

This is important, because we have seen, particularly with the budget bills, an absurd number of different pieces of legislation put together. We have seen absolutely absurd combinations, with environmental laws, natural resources laws, and taxation laws like the FATCA provisions that were in Bill C-31 all thrown together into one particular bill.

In the case of Bill C-18, we have an omnibus bill that puts in place amendments all related to agriculture, in some cases making similar edits to different bills.

First, there are amendments to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act. The key changes move Canada towards ratification of the 1991 model law of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants, UPOV '91.

Second, it expands the rights afforded to plant breeders for the varieties they develop and increases the places along the value chain where plant breeders can collect royalties.

Bill C-18 also includes the following new exclusive rights for plant breeders: reproduction, conditioning, sales, export or import, repeated use to produce commercially another plant variety if the repetition is necessary for that purpose, and stocking for the purpose of any of the other protected acts.

The term of the grant of plant breeders' rights has also been increased from previous legislation, from 18 years to 20 years. It is 25 years in the case of a tree, a vine, or any other category listed by the regulation. It also includes a new clause that grants farmers' privilege, allowing farmers to save seed and condition seed for purposes of production and reproduction on their own farms. It is important to note that this privilege is not extended to the storing of seed or to the sale of harvested material from protected seed.

Bill C-18 also grants the CFIA the ability to make changes through regulation to which circumstances and classes of farmers and varieties would not be covered under the farmers' privilege. This protects the rights of researchers to use patented materials as the basis for developing a new variety or for another research use. It also enhances public accessibility to the registry of plant varieties. This of course is a major change from the previous act.

It also maintains the ability of the CFIA to grant compulsory licences to ensure that in certain situations, plant varieties are available at reasonable prices, widely distributed, and of good quality.

Bill C-18 also includes an amendment that allows plant breeders to request that their plant breeders' rights be exempt from a compulsory licence. It also grants the government the ability to make changes governing exemptions from compulsory licensing through regulations, without legislative change.

● (2345)

There are some benefits in Bill C-18.

First, it would ensure that variety developers would be able to see a return on investment for their plant breeding research efforts, providing incentives for an important sector of Canadian agribusiness. It would also grant farmers' privilege to allow farmers to save the conditioned seed for use on their own farms. It would promote access for Canadian farmers to the results of private breeding research from Canada and other countries through more effective intellectual property rights. As members know, this is a concern people have raised.

It would protect researchers from infringement of plant breeders' rights. It would enhance public accessibility and transparency when it comes to plant breeding, and it would maintain the existing compulsory licence system, providing some assurance that varieties can be made available at reasonable prices, widely distributed, and kept at a high quality. This is a very important aspect of the bill that I know members will find interesting.

I know my colleagues in the NDP are very focused on this agriculture bill, because, as we know, we have a whole variety of NDP MPs representing some of the heartland of Canadian agriculture across the country.

I would like to say at this point that we have diversity like we have never had before in the House of Commons, and from both rural and urban areas. It is just fantastic to see the NDP caucus, 100 strong, which is going to grow to perhaps double that after the next election. We are certainly looking forward to that.

One might ask why the member for Burnaby—New Westminster is speaking on an agriculture bill. Perhaps the government House leader is asking that question too. The reality, and I know members will find this interesting, is that the most fertile land in all of Canada is in Burnaby. That particular area is known as the Big Bend area of Burnaby. It is part of the Fraser delta. The Fraser River comes down, after going through the Coast Mountains, and provides for incredibly fertile ground.

I should say, because I think it is important to note, that not only is it the most fertile ground, but because of the previous actions of the B.C. NDP government back in 1972, which established the agricultural land reserve, the first government in the country to do that, the agricultural land in Burnaby has been preserved. That is extremely important. It is an urban area, but right there is the agricultural heartland of the Lower Mainland.

What is even more important to note is that the city of Burnaby, for the last 25 years, has been run by an NDP government, under the Burnaby Citizens Association. In fact, in the last municipal election, with a strong agricultural component, the mayor, the entire city council, eight of eight city councillors, and seven of seven on the school board, meaning every single municipally elected official, were members of the NDP and members of the Burnaby Citizens Association. That is the longest-standing—

• (2350)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Usually I would love to hear in this place talk of beautiful British Columbia, but perhaps the member could please bring this to a point of relevance. Perhaps he could say how Bill C-18 would actually benefit our home province. I think that would be a good turn of events.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): We can go back to the hon. member once again. Relevance is relevant in this place, and I am sure he can connect what he is saying to the matter before the House.

Mr. Peter Julian: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

The point is simply this. The Burnaby Citizens Association, NDP affiliated, swept all those seats because its representatives had been putting forward the preservation of agricultural land in the city of Burnaby. On plant breeders rights, they actively worked on the types of issues that we now see, finally, the federal government wake up on.

I have one more point, which is that *Maclean's* national magazine said that the city of Burnaby, NDP-run for 25 years, was actually the best-managed city in all of Canada. That is because that party pays close attention to the details, including agricultural work.

I will now talk about some of the concerns about Bill C-18, which my colleagues have already raised on the floor of the House of Commons. However, there are a few major concerns regarding the clauses on farmers' privilege.

First, the farmers' privilege does not include the stocking of propagating material for any use. Even if farmers are able to save seed for the purpose of reproduction, whether we are talking about the city of Burnaby or any other part of the country, it appears they

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may have to pay to store it, which would effectively negate that privilege.

Also, farmers' privilege does not extend to the sale of harvested material. This means that farmers will likely still be required to pay for the sale of the crops grown from farm saved seed.

It also means that plant breeders could potentially generate revenue on a farmer's entire production rather than just on the seed purchased to grow the crop. This could have significant impacts on the profit margin of farmers. I will get back to this before I end, because I am going to say some things that I know my Conservative colleagues are going to react to.

This issue of the profit margins for farmers is a very important component. Unfortunately, I regret to say, the Conservatives have a pretty poor record in that area.

Some farmers say paying a royalty based on what they produce instead of the seed they buy reduces their risk. If they harvest a poor crop, they pay less with an end-point royalty compared to paying up front when they buy seed.

Another concern that has been raised with Bill C-18 is it includes amendments that would allow the CFIA to make changes through regulation, not legislation, to the farmers' privilege. This means the government could significantly hinder these rights at any time without parliamentary oversight.

Unfortunately, the Conservative government has a notoriously bad record in terms of rights, rules, following due process, all those kinds of things. To put in place another situation where the government basically can do whatever the heck it wants to do, and we know the Conservative government loves that drunk with power, without parliamentary oversight has raised real concerns among the agricultural community, including in my area, the Big Bend area of Burnaby, British Columbia. Again, I will mention that it is the most fertile farm land in all of Canada.

Allowing for farm safe seed is an optional exception, and this is under the UPOV '91, meaning that Canada could disallow farm-safe seed and still fulfill its international obligations under the agreement.

While Bill C-18 goes so far as to define what is meant by "document", it provides no definition of "farmer". This has important implications for the enforcement of the farmers' privilege, especially given that Bill C-18 would allow the government to make significant changes to the farmers' privilege provisions through regulatory changes.

This is a concern that farmers have expressed right across the country, including in many of the farming regions that are represented by the strong rural caucus in the NDP. It is a wonderful caucus that represents farmers extremely effectively across the country, particularly in central and Atlantic Canada, as well as British Columbia.

Given the government's recent changes in Bill C-18 that would limit farm loss deductions to people whose primary income would be from farming, this is an area where obviously more clarity is needed.

Adjournment Proceedings

In order to prevent the privatization of existing varieties, our common heritage of public seeds developed over millennia, we must ensure a variety registration system that ensures new crop varieties are as good or better than existing ones. This is very important. We also must ensure that farmers will continue to have access to existing cereal varieties that were developed by public plant breeders.

● (2355)

There are also a few concerns regarding the potential legal burden for producers. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture has called for protections for producers from claims of patent infringement with respect to natural accidental spreading of patented plant genetic material. However, these protections are not included in Bill C-18. This is an oversight and obviously a matter of some concern.

Given the expansion of plant breeders' rights under Bill C-18, it is likely that farmers will face increased and expensive litigation. However, producers may well be on an extremely uneven financial playing field with plant breeders. There are no provisions in Bill C-18 to ensure that legal fees do not impede the defence of farmers in such cases.

There are amendments to the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act and the advance payments program. The advance payments program is a financial loan guarantee program that gives producers easier access to credit through cash advances. The APP provides producers with a cash advance on the value of the agricultural products during a specified period. This improves the cashflow of producers throughout the year and helps them meet their financial obligations, and benefit from the best market conditions.

This is where I come back to the whole issue of farm profitability. The area of the country where we have the lowest level of farm receipts is the province of Alberta, which has been governed by Conservatives for decades. This is something we have encountered across the country. There is no doubt, not just when we talk about the gutting of the Canadian Wheat Board, but in general, that farmers simply do not fare as well when Conservative governments are in place.

The Conservatives may not like the truth and may not be able to handle the truth, but the truth is the truth. They have the lowest level of farm receipts in the country. I have been to the farms in southern Alberta, where they are really trying to get by because of poor decisions both at the federal level and at the provincial level. We have seen those farm receipts going through the gun.

There is one exception, and that is the supply-managed sector. The supply-managed sector has had no better friend than the New Democratic Party caucus, which has stood up again and again. Every time the government tries to gut supply management, whether it is negotiating trade deals or anywhere else, we stand with the supply-managed farmers and the communities that depend on them. That is the one area of the country where receipts have not gone through the floor. Farmers—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The time for government orders has expired. When this matter returns before the House, the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster will have two minutes remaining in his speech and questions and comments.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

● (2400)

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, South Sudan faces three concurrent crises, with an ongoing conflict, an acute humanitarian crisis, and a chronic food and security problem.

South Sudan is a level three humanitarian emergency. Violence has displaced more than one million people, 923,000 within the country, more than half of them children, and 300,000 people having fled to neighbouring countries.

With the rainy season, the situation will only get worse. Life-saving supplies must be deployed to the hardest to reach in order to avert a humanitarian catastrophe. Air drops are taking place and famine is probable.

The UN has warned that, if the conflict in South Sudan continues, half of the country's 12 million people will either be starving, internally displaced, refugees abroad, or dead by the year's end. According to the UN in May, the international community urgently needed to donate at least another \$500 million if South Sudan's devastating slide into famine and humanitarian crisis was to be stopped.

Therefore, on May 16, 2014, I asked the government, "Will Canada attend the May 19-20 donor-pledging conference in Norway, and will it increase its support?"

Unfortunately, the response I received was only an expression of concern, a statement of what the government is currently doing, and a promise to monitor the situation. That is, I received no answer, no promise to attend the donor conference, and no promise to pledge.

That is not good enough, when the political divisions within South Sudan had resulted in heavy fighting and mass atrocities. In Bentiu, for example, civilians were targeted on the basis of their ethnicity and nationality. Radio stations were used to broadcast hate speech, urging men to rape women of specific ethnicities and demanding that rival groups be expelled from the town.

After receiving no answer from the government regarding the donor conference, we issued a press release calling on the government to send representatives to attend the international conference to see what further help Canada could provide to address the dire humanitarian crisis in South Sudan.

Why did the government refuse to answer my simple question: that is, would the government attend or not? It is shameful that Canada refused to pledge at the conference.

There is overcrowding, competition for shelter and life-saving humanitarian aid, and an increased risk of disease and infection in South Sudan. We have to stand by the people of South Sudan. Expressed concern is not enough. We have to do more.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for raising this issue of the situation in South Sudan. I agree on many of the points with respect to the situation in South Sudan. Due to the conflict and other reasons, it is deteriorating very badly and requires attention. I can tell her in no uncertain terms that, contrary to what she has been telling us—that Canada is not involved—Canada has been involved in South Sudan from the day that country became independent. Prior to that, Canada was one of the major countries, not only as a donor but in assisting toward achieving peace.

I myself have visited that country twice. Following the birth of this nation, we had great hopes that this would move forward. Unfortunately, the political infighting that has taken place has really put South Sudan way back with respect to development assistance.

Together with its partners, Canada has been working to see what is the best way forward, working with the Government of South Sudan in moving forward to meet its development assistance needs.

It is true that the UN is there now to stop the fighting.

Some good news that I want to share with the hon. member, which came yesterday, was that both parties who were fighting have agreed to peace in Addis Ababa, led by the African Union. Hopefully, that peace will work toward assuring a climate where all the assistance we have been giving reaches its destination.

Making announcements or attending donor conferences is not the one effective way to reach out or to offer assistance. Rather, it is to work together jointly with the other partners that we have identified. In the case of South Sudan, we have identified partners and what we can do.

Only two weeks ago in Calgary I announced development assistance to the Red Cross so it can use mobile units for the child maternity cases in South Sudan. We are working with our NGO partners. Canada is on the ground in South Sudan. We hope that the people of South Sudan very quickly resolve their differences and move forward, and that the situation, as the hon. member has described, is averted, most importantly the humanitarian crisis.

● (2405)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we all hope that the good news yesterday will hold.

The government has given in the past, but its approach needs to be rethought and needs to take into consideration the long-term problems caused by the civil conflict begun in December 2013. Will the government support civil society coalitions that are working for peace and reconciliation in South Sudan? How will the government monitor humanitarian needs and respond in a timely fashion to the changing needs on the ground? Will the government consider support to UNMISS to protect civilians, especially women and children, from violence? Will the government encourage the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and

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Armed Conflict to travel to South Sudan and request a report to the UN Security Council on the situation of children in South Sudan?

Canada must remain engaged to keep South Sudan at the forefront of international attention. We do hope that this news yesterday continues, and that the good news holds.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that Canada is working with the United Nations on many of the issues the member is talking about, including, as I just said, with NGOs to provide development assistance out there. However, most importantly, we need a climate of security in that country so that we can work there and build on development assistance. There is no point in building all those things, and then intertribal fighting breaks out and we lose everything.

However, let me say that Canada is very much engaged internationally with our partners, most importantly with the United Nations, in achieving what the member has said. We both have the same interest, which is South Sudan finding its feet in Africa as a new nation and moving forward.

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a crisis at VIA Rail. The number of passengers has dropped as has the frequency of trips. Equipment is in terrible shape and is often out of service. Trains are increasingly late. The train no longer even goes to my region, Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. We have not had service for two years. Rail service in eastern Canada has been cut by 50%. There is no service on Vancouver Island as well. They have not had service there for four years. This is a crisis.

The government's support for passenger rail service in Canada is woefully inadequate. VIA Rail has reduced service in all of eastern Canada. The Ocean only runs three times a week. Many stations in eastern Canada have closed. VIA Rail stopped running through the Gaspé almost two years ago. Although the Gaspé railway is now safe, VIA Rail still has not resumed service to the Gaspé, in spite of its commitment. It is unacceptable.

It is about time the government addressed this issue, which is very important to all Canadians. VIA Rail must be able to provide proper passenger rail service for Canadians. That is why I introduced a bill today to provide a better framework for VIA Rail. During the summer, I will present my bill to Canadians, and I will have the privilege of hearing the comments and suggestions of my constituents.

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• (2410)

[*English*]

VIA Rail is a very popular service, not only in my riding but in all of eastern Canada. VIA Rail reduced the service in my riding to zero passages per week. We do not have any VIA service whatsoever. VIA promised to come back when the rail line was in a secure state. It has now been confirmed to be secure, and VIA Rail still has not started service. It reduced service to the Maritimes by 50%.

I remember when VIA Rail issued a press release soon afterward, claiming that it was a great success because it only lost 40% of its clientele. I hardly think that losing 40% of the clientele of VIA Rail is in any way, shape, or form a victory. VIA Rail should be ashamed of itself.

[*Translation*]

The Canadian government must give VIA Rail what it needs to provide proper service. VIA Rail is a vital service for the Gaspé region. We need it to ensure that the tourism industry is well supported.

A remote area such as ours must have transportation that properly serves the region so that its inhabitants can have access to major centres like everyone else. We need a network that will provide these services. Unfortunately, VIA Rail is not fulfilling its obligations towards the people of the Gaspé, and more and more it is not fulfilling its obligations towards Canadians.

The Government of Canada must give more support to VIA Rail. It has missed the boat. It is about time the government put more emphasis on rail transportation.

[*English*]

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, VIA Rail, is an independent federal crown corporation. It is responsible for the safety of its operation and its passengers. This includes ensuring, to the best of its ability, that the track and infrastructure on which it depends is safe and reliable.

VIA Rail suspended service along the Gaspé Peninsula because safety inspections undertaken by the Province of Quebec revealed that the tracks and signalling on this rail line did not meet standards for safe passenger rail operations. The rail line is owned by a private company. It is the rail line owner, not VIA Rail, that is responsible for repairing the tracks and signalling and ensuring safety for operations.

It is important to note that the rail line in the Gaspé Peninsula is entirely within the province of Quebec and is provincially regulated, so the safety regime of Quebec must be followed. The Government of Quebec will therefore review any work that has been undertaken to ensure that it meets provincial rail safety standards. Once the provincial government approves the repairs, VIA Rail will determine whether the track and signalling are safe to resume its operations on the line. VIA is responsible for ensuring that it has the appropriate staff and resources in place to provide safe and efficient rail service.

Given the rail line is solely within the borders of Quebec, any public funding for infrastructure repairs and upgrades for this line would be a provincial responsibility. Nevertheless, our government

has taken action and has provided funding for upgrades to this line in the past. In 2007, our government provided a one-time contribution of nearly \$18 million to the municipalities in the Gaspé region to allow them to acquire the rail line and to make repairs to bring the rail line back into a state of good repair.

Aside from that, our government provides VIA Rail with a significant operating subsidy to support a national network of passenger rail services. In 2013-14, this subsidy was \$305 million. Over the past seven years, our government has provided VIA Rail with more than \$1 billion in capital funding to upgrade infrastructure and equipment such as tracks, bridges, stations, locomotives, and rail cars.

Our government supports a passenger railway network that meets the needs of today's travellers, while supporting the efficient use of taxpayer dollars. VIA must work to ensure it is not a burden to taxpayers. It is very concerned that it is, at this time, also posting significant losses.

• (2415)

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I do want to point out that the rail line in the Gaspé was owned by CN. The government allowed CN to sell the railway to the municipalities. The municipalities in the Gaspé are the owners, not a private corporation per se, but a conglomeration of all the municipalities.

The government allowed the track to deteriorate to the state that it was in. It now says it washes its hands of it, that it is no longer responsible because it allowed the sale to provincial municipalities. That is abdication of responsibility. It should have ensured that the track was in a good state in the first place before it allowed the sale. It did not. It did not order an engineer's report. It simply evaluated the value of the track based on CN's own numbers. That is just not the proper due diligence. The government failed in its obligations.

What it should do now is make up for that and ensure the track is safe. It is in fact safe, according to the corporation that owns it. As of June, VIA Rail no longer has reason not to start service again in the Gaspé. The government should not hide behind this arm's-length argument. As the parliamentary secretary pointed out, the government invests heavily in VIA Rail. VIA Rail will come to the Gaspé if it has proper support from the government. I would argue at this point that it does not have adequate support.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, contrary to what my hon. colleague is saying, as I just stated, and let me repeat again, in 2007 our government provided a one-time contribution of nearly \$18 million to the municipalities in the Gaspé region to allow them to upgrade the rail line.

Again, let me point this out to the hon. member. Since the entire line is within the Quebec region, it is the Government of Quebec, the provincial government, that is also responsible for its safety and for looking after its regulations.

It is clearly important that it is a joint effort by all of them. At this current time, once the Government of Quebec feels the railway line is fine, it can tell VIA, and VIA, when it knows it has the capacity to do that, it will do it.

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Let me say this quite clearly. As far as I will set it out here, we do provide support and will continue to provide support, but we also expect others to take on the burden as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the motion to adjourn the House is

now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:18 a.m.)

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