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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 25, 2015

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 25, 2015

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

•(1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, today, led by the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

ELMWOOD—TRANSCONA

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, countless community groups are making a difference in Elmwood—Transcona each and every day. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize some of their efforts and achievements. For 50 years, the Transcona Pipe Band has showcased our Scottish Canadian community's heritage with innovative bagpiping and drumming presentations that have captured the imagination of audiences at home and around the world. I would like to acknowledge Dave Stewart and the numerous parent volunteers who devote their precious time and energy to this respected Transcona institution.

The Together in Elmwood Parent Child Coalition and the Elmwood East Kildonan Active Living Centre are two other organizations that provide valuable programming to the community. These groups play an integral role in improving the quality of life of local residents, especially youth and seniors. I am glad to recognize Leilani Esteban and Con Gislason for their hard work and commitment to supporting our community members, young and old, to live up to their fullest potential.

I wish to thank these groups and the many others for all that they do to build a better community for everyone.

MOUNT DENNIS OUTDOOR COMMUNITY SKATING RINK

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, winter is finally behind us. In York South—Weston, this cold, harsh season was made warmer and brighter by a dedicated group of volunteers who for the third year ran the Mount Dennis outdoor community skating rink in Pearen Park.

I was delighted to host a Family Day skating party there. Over 400 individuals learned to skate at the rink this past season. Nearly 900 used the free skate loan program. The rink continued its fine tradition of making a positive difference in the community, one smile and one skating lesson at a time.

With a tip of my toque, I would like to congratulate rink coordinator Simon Chamberlain who received a volunteer Toronto award for his outstanding efforts and ice master Guy Ruggieri and his over 40 volunteers who gave generously of their time to make this grassroots initiative a smashing success.

Margaret Mead said, "... a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." That is a fitting tribute to the Mount Dennis volunteers.

* * *

•(1405)

MEDALS OF BRAVERY

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, a fire broke out at the Irene and Leslie Dubé Centre for Mental Health, creating thick smoke. After having to retreat from the area several times due to the smoke, two of Saskatoon Health Region's security team members, Chris Clark and Tyler Campbell, bravely rescued a trapped female patient from a burning room in the centre. "It was a scary situation, but we knew someone was in there and we needed to get them out, so we were going to do whatever we could to make that happen", Clark said.

Fortunately, the fire was isolated to a single room and no one was seriously injured, thanks in part to the actions of these two men. This March 6, both Corporal Clark and Mr. Campbell received Medals of Bravery from Governor General David Johnston for their part in this rescue.

On behalf of the House of Commons and the citizens of Saskatoon—Humboldt, I would like to extend our thanks to Corporal Clark and Mr. Campbell. Their bravery and concern for the needs of others are an example for us all. They represent the best of Canada.

*Statements by Members***WILLIAM “BULL” MARSH**

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a renowned Cape Bretoner, William “Bull” Marsh, who passed away over the weekend. Bull was born in New Waterford on January 21, 1922. After serving four years in the navy during World War II, Bull went to work in New Waterford's No. 12 Colliery, then transferred to No. 16, where he began his work with the United Mine Workers of America.

In 1958, he was elected president of District 26 and held that position for 22 consecutive years. He was the longest serving president in District 26 history. In 1965, there were 6,500 miners working in Cape Breton and Bull played a major role in securing their livelihoods.

He had an amazing talent as a speaker. In his leisure time he could be seen fishing, hunting or training his Labrador retrievers. Giving the miners a fair deal is what Bull stood for. His impact on the community was remarkable and he will be fondly remembered for many more years to come.

* * *

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning at a press conference on Parliament Hill, Canadians from all walks of life called on the government to protect religious freedoms in Canada. Canada is recognized as a country that advocates for human rights and religious freedom internationally. Canada's excellent international reputation is due to our government's strong stand on human rights and the outstanding work of Canada's ambassador for religious freedom.

We also need to focus on religious freedom in Canada to protect the chartered rights of all Canadians. Religious freedom is integral to the fabric of the Canadian identity. It is at the core of who we are as a tolerant and pluralistic society. It is central to our culture, our history and has shaped us as a nation.

Recent intolerant attacks on religious freedom in Canada are being condemned. I call on all members in the House to commit themselves to protect our religious freedom.

* * *

[*Translation*]**GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY**

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to rise in the House today, March 25, to celebrate Greek Independence Day. As founders of democracy, philosophy and theatre, the Greek people have, on many occasions throughout history, demonstrated resiliency, courage and the will to exist and to be.

I am lucky to represent a riding, Laval—Les Îles, that is home to one of the largest Greek communities in Quebec. I am therefore pleased to invite not just the people of Laval, but all of my colleagues in the House, to participate in the celebrations that will be put on by the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal this weekend. I am proud to say that I will be there.

I would especially like to invite everyone to the parade that will take place this Sunday on Jean-Talon in Montreal. Every year, the parade showcases Greek culture, which is so vibrant in my community.

Long live the Greeks in Laval, Quebec and Canada, and long live Greece.

[*Member spoke in Greek as follows:*]*Zito Y Ellada!*

* * *

[*English*]**GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY**

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 194th anniversary of the great rebellion of the Greek people against the Ottoman Empire, liberating a nation after almost 400 years of illegal occupation.

On this March 25 and throughout this week, Canadians of Hellenic descent will be celebrating this national day of independence with parades and community events across Canada, including in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver and many other places.

In my riding of Richmond Hill, the Hellenic Canadian community of York Region will be hosting a Greek school celebration at the Hellenic Academy of York located at Pleasantville Public School, with student performances including poems, songs and traditional Greek dances.

We salute all Canadians of Greek heritage during this time of celebration, and recognize their important and positive contributions to Canada. I would like to wish everyone in York Region, throughout Canada and indeed throughout the world a very happy Greek Independence Day.

[*Member spoke in Greek as follows:*]*Zito i 25h Martiou!**Hronia Polla!*

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● (1410)

COLONEL FITZGERALD BRANCH 233 ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to sincerely congratulate the Orangeville Colonel Fitzgerald Branch 233 Royal Canadian Legion on its 80th anniversary. Since 1935, this exemplary legion branch has been an integral member of our community through its extraordinary efforts to ensure that the imperative act of remembrance has been passed from generation to generation.

Furthermore, this tremendous organization has continued to dedicate itself to enriching our community by sponsoring youth groups such as Girl Guides, escorting veterans to and from medical appointments and hosting the annual seniors Christmas lunch as well as public events such as Canada Day, Founder's Day and of course Remembrance Day.

Statements by Members

This Saturday, the Orangeville legion will be hosting its anniversary celebration. This is an excellent time for all of us to recognize and thank this outstanding legion for its exceptional service to our community and country.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the Conservative government's constant mismanagement of the temporary foreign worker program, next Wednesday a large number of temporary foreign workers must leave Canada. The government will not actually tell us how many.

Among them are workers who have already filed applications for permanent residency and are at present waiting for an answer. These workers followed the rules. They came to Canada, worked hard and contributed to our economy. The current government changed the rules midstream. Based on an arbitrary deadline, the government is going to send these workers away. It is unfair and heartless.

We are calling on the Conservative government to allow temporary foreign workers who have submitted an application for permanent residency to be able to stay in Canada as their applications are reviewed and answered. We are also calling on the government to take immediate steps to restore pathways to citizenship for all temporary foreign workers as part of a full review of the badly mismanaged temporary foreign worker—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Brampton—Springdale.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, mothers and fathers should be able to make the important decisions that affect their own children. That is why our new family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit will give 100% of families with kids an average of nearly \$2,000 per child. That is nearly \$12,000 per child over six years.

From that side of the House, we hear of new taxes, high debt and the removal of all of these benefits we have brought forward to help Canadian families. Canadians do not want their money funnelled into bureaucratic black holes. They do not want higher taxes.

Canadians need tax relief and support that they can use as they see fit, and that is exactly what we are delivering on this side of the House.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite all its hard work to achieve gender equality at all levels, the Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine has noted that women are still under-represented in decision-making roles. This bitter reality is even more disconcerting considering the Conservatives' inaction on this issue.

In 2012, this government committed to creating an advisory council with a mandate to increase opportunities for women's leadership on corporate boards of public and private companies. Unfortunately, the long-awaited report has yet to be delivered.

We could have taken positive action by supporting the bill introduced by my colleague, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, which was intended to increase women's representation on boards of crown corporations. The Conservatives chose the status quo.

Now is the time to move forward and take action to ensure that the women of tomorrow can contribute to our society in a way that reflects their full potential.

* * *

● (1415)

[*English*]

VETERANS

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is keeping our pledge to strengthen support for Canada's veterans and their families.

Recently, the Minister of Veterans Affairs announced changes that will ensure the earning loss benefit is calculated in the same way for reserve force veterans as it is for regular force veterans.

This is about respect for reservists. This is also about families, as the families of our reserves will have the confidence of knowing they too will benefit in the event of their reserve veteran being seriously injured or killed in the line of duty.

Canada's reserves form a crucial component of our armed forces and served our country proudly in Afghanistan. Our Conservative government knows this change is just the right thing to do.

* * *

SOUTH AFRICA

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently returned from a moving trip to South Africa on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, the iconic moral compass of the anti-apartheid movement that inspired the creation of a free, democratic, egalitarian, and non-racial South Africa with Nelson Mandela, our honorary Canadian citizen, as its first president.

I had occasion to meet with Susan Shabangu, South Africa's minister responsible for women, on the eve of International Women's Day, whose message was that empowering women was empowering Africa, and indeed, it is equally true that empowering women is empowering Canada.

Oral Questions

I met with Minister of Justice Tshililo Michael Masutha, discussing the contribution of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Canadian jurisprudence to South African constitutionalism. I also met with Minister of the Presidency Jeff Radebe on the importance of a human rights foreign policy.

There is great potential for a Canada-South Africa partnership in the area of women's rights, constitutionalism, and international justice, where both our countries and peoples will be the beneficiaries.

* * *

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, manufacturing in southern Ontario remains critical to our nation's economy and long-term prosperity. Since we came to office, we have taken action to support manufacturing and all the jobs it supports in southern Ontario and across Canada.

While our government continues to create and stand up for jobs in the manufacturing sector, the leader of the Liberal party has been very clear in saying, "A large part of it is transitioning away from manufacturing-based employment as a driver in the economy".

These comments are further proof that the Liberal leader is an economic novice, who is not capable of managing the Canadian economy in a still fragile global economy. Canadians deserve better.

That is why our government will continue to focus on jobs, fostering economic growth, and ensuring long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MILITARY CONTRIBUTION AGAINST ISIL

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister delivered a fine speech to try to sell us on the idea of a lengthy, ill-defined and costly war.

The Prime Minister prefers military intervention over humanitarian aid. In fact, the numbers speak for themselves. Since the beginning of 2014, the government has committed \$100 million to Iraqis affected by the conflict. The war on the ground alone has already cost \$122 million and that is just a small portion of the total bill.

Let us not forget that the Canadian mission in Libya ended up costing six times more than initially estimated, and extending operations will cost hundreds of millions more. In the meantime, the government is not making any announcement about increasing aid in Iraq and the entire region.

The motion that the Conservatives moved yesterday does not include any plans for humanitarian assistance. The NDP puts people above weapons.

* * *

MILITARY CONTRIBUTION AGAINST ISIL

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the terrorist death cult that is the group known

as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is specifically targeting Canada. Voters in my riding, Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, believe that it is vital to weaken ISIL to the point where it no longer represents a threat to Canada.

Thanks to the Royal Canadian Air Force and our coalition partners, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is already in defensive mode in 20% of the zones it controlled. Our government believes that it is in Canada's national interest to take part in the global fight against jihadist terrorism.

The Leader of the Liberal Party and the Leader of the NDP are not taking the jihadist threat seriously. They are out of touch with the international community. They would withdraw Canada from the global fight against jihadist terrorism.

I am proud that Canada is helping combat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the foreign affairs minister claimed that Canada's legal basis for bombing in Syria was "the same basis as the Americans". The United States justification for war in Syria is that it is defending the Iraqi government.

Does the Prime Minister stand by that?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have already made it very clear that Canada will pursue its air campaign in Syria on the same legal basis that our allies have been pursuing that campaign without challenge for the past several months.

Our position is that ISIL should be given no safe refuge in Syria. The fact that Canada and its allies strongly oppose the Assad regime is, of course, absolutely no reason to allow ISIL safe haven in Syria, from which it could launch attacks against others.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, precisely in Samantha Power's letter to His Excellency Ban Ki-moon on September 23, she says that that is the American justification; that they are helping Iraq and it is at the request of Iraq that they are going into Syria.

[*Translation*]

The question for us, then, is this:

Did Canada receive a formal request for military intervention in Syria from the Iraqi government, yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat my answer.

Oral Questions

The Government of Canada is pursuing the Islamic State in Syria on the same legal basis as our allies. They have been pursuing that campaign without challenge over the past several months, and we accept that.

With regard to the specific question, the Iraqi government has expressed its support for our actions and those of our allies. Obviously, our motivation is to protect our country from this terrorist caliphate.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that means the answer is no. They never received a request for military intervention in Syria from Iraq, unlike the Americans, who indicated as much in their letter to the United Nations.

[*English*]

Let us stay with the United Nations because the Prime Minister says that he is following the U.S. model here. The United States wrote to the Secretary-General, as required under article 51 of the UN charter, and laid out its legal case for its planned intervention in Syria.

Has the Prime Minister written to the United Nations, laying out Canada's justification for its planned intervention in Syria?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is pursuing this action on exactly the same legal basis as its allies.

I am not sure what point the leader of the NDP is ultimately making. If he is suggesting that there is any significant legal risk of lawyers from ISIL taking the Government of Canada to court and winning, the Government of Canada's view is that the chances of that are negligible.

We are clearly defending not only the wider region, but—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, extraordinary. Living in a Canada where that sort of idiocy passes for argument in the House of Parliament.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I know that the hon. Leader of the Opposition will want to avoid using terminology like that which can cause a great deal of disorder.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

● (1425)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the Punjab Legislative Assembly passed a unanimous motion calling on Canada to apologize for the *Komagata Maru* incident.

The *Komagata Maru* is a dark moment in Canadian history. The ship was turned away simply because its passengers were from India. Upon returning home, many were arrested or killed.

Will the Prime Minister finally do the right thing, acknowledge this horrific tragedy, and apologize in this House for the *Komagata Maru*?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP knows that Canada and Canadians have appropriately acknowledged that incident for some time.

I would be remiss if I did not return to the previous exchange, and while I obviously will not repeat the terminology used by the leader of the NDP, if his idea of protecting Canada's national interest is that we do not do everything in our power, legally, militarily, and in terms of co-operation with allies, to defend the interest of this country against the terrorist caliphate, he and I obviously have very different ideas of what the national interest of this country is.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada thinks he is above international law also. He is not, and Canada is not. That is all we have.

[*Translation*]

World leaders are taking up the cause of Raif Badawi, the Saudi Arabian writer who was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes for creating a pro-democracy blog.

I had the opportunity to meet with Ensaf Haidar, Mr. Badawi's wife, who lives in Sherbrooke with their three children. One cannot help but be moved by her courage.

With so much support for Mr. Badawi, what is keeping the Prime Minister, to whom I wrote about this issue, from doing something to secure this man's release so that he can be reunited with his family here in Canada?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada and I have already indicated that we support Mr. Badawi's release.

[*English*]

Once again, I do want to return to the previous exchange.

If the leader of the NDP is suggesting for a moment that there is any case in the international legal community that stands behind ISIL, he is not only wrong, but the international community has united in opposition to this group. Five dozen members of the United Nations have united to confront this international terrorist organization. Canada is working with them. Canada is working not only with people from our own political family but with liberals and social democrats across the world in taking a strong stand to stay this ruthlessness.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's motion explicitly leaves the door open to expanding our combat operation outside of Iraq and Syria against terrorist entities aligned with ISIL.

Is the Prime Minister considering sending our bombers or special forces into Yemen or Libya or against Boko Haram in sub-Saharan Africa?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): The answer is no, Mr. Speaker, we are not. I thought we were clear on that yesterday, but I am glad to be clear on it again today.

Let me be clear. Where we face organizations, as we do today in Iraq and Syria, that are establishing caliphates, large territorial areas from which they are threatening to launch terrorist attacks against this country, Canada will work with our allies in every single case where that ever occurs to make sure we protect the security of this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's motion leaves the door open to expanding our combat mission outside of Iraq and Syria.

Can the Prime Minister assure the House that yesterday's motion will not be used to justify sending military resources to combat the Islamic State elsewhere in the world?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the government's intentions are clear. We are trying to prevent the Islamic State from taking refuge in Syria. We will also continue to combat the Islamic State in Iraq.

This is different from the Liberal Party's position, which makes absolutely no sense. The Liberals support another military mission, but not this one. We are clear. We will continue to work with our allies to protect the security of this country.

* * *

• (1430)

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the economic news for the middle class is getting worse, not better. Stats Can just said that the past 15 months have been the weakest period of growth it has ever recorded.

There are continued fears of a recession in Alberta, and today, TD forecast that the unemployment rate will rise this year, yet the Prime Minister's only plan remains a tax break for the rich. How will that solve any of these problems?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know very well that we are in a fragile and uncertain global economy, and of course, this country is being impacted by the dramatic fall in oil prices. That is only more reason to stick to the plan that has generated 1.2 million net new jobs since the end of the recession, to lower people's taxes, to make targeted investments in the Canadian economy, and to run a very strong fiscal ship. Nobody in the world, other than the leader of the Liberal Party, believes the solution to any of these problems is to hike taxes on the middle class.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week witness after witness has come forward to lay out the critical flaws in Bill C-51.

Last night we heard from retired Supreme Court Justice John Major, who testified that the judicial warrant the Conservatives are fond of calling oversight is simply not oversight. Major said that in order for there to be proper information sharing there needs to be oversight at the back end.

Why is the concept of more powers, more oversight, such a hard concept for the minister to understand?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the international jihadi movement has declared war on Canada and its allies. Canadians are being targeted by jihadi terrorists simply because these terrorists hate our society and the values it represents. Jihadi terrorism is not a human right; it is an act of war.

Regarding oversight, we believe strongly that third-party, non-partisan, independent expert oversight of our national security agencies is a much better model than a political intervention in the process.

There are key powers in the new legislation that are subject to judicial review and judicial authorization. We agree with the Supreme Court that SIRC is the best model for Canadians.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is just the opposite of what Justice Major told us last night, but I am not asking the minister to take my word for things here. I am asking him to listen to the legions of witnesses opposed to this bad bill.

Even the Internet's Mozilla Foundation has come out swinging against the sweeping provisions of Bill C-51, calling it "an approach to cybersecurity that only serves to undermine user trust, threaten the openness of the Web, and reduce the security of the Internet and its users".

What is it going to take for the minister to get the message that sacrificing the rights and freedoms of Canadians will not make Canadians safer?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member would really listen to Justice Major and the Air India commission, he would support the provision in Bill C-51 regarding information sharing.

Bill C-51 is the most important national security legislation since the 9/11 era... Bill C-51 is designed for the post-9/11 era. It's a new legislation for a new era in terms of security threats.

Who said that? It was Professor Elliot Tepper from Carleton University. Where was the member when the witness said that?

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in committee yesterday, more expert witnesses criticized Bill C-51.

Oral Questions

Scott Tod, the Ontario Provincial Police's top anti-terrorism official, cautioned the government. Bill C-51 will give the police force more responsibilities but will not provide additional resources. The police force will therefore have to reallocate resources currently being used to combat organized crime.

What is the minister's plan for making sure that our police officers can continue to do their jobs well?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past nine years, our government has increased resources allocated to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police seven times. In total, the RCMP's budget has gone up by more than a third.

Unfortunately, the New Democrats were unwilling to support us in giving our police forces those resources. We intend to stay the course to ensure that our police forces have the resources and tools they need to combat the terrorist threat. That is why Bill C-51 is on the table.

• (1435)

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, police officers are not the only ones concerned about the consequences of Bill C-51.

The Government of Quebec has denounced the fact that Bill C-51 will give the Canadian Security Intelligence Service;

"such vast powers, including the possibility to take certain actions that violate the Charter".

The Conservative majority on the committee refused to allow ministers from Quebec to appear.

Why is the government refusing to hear from those who will have to enforce this deeply flawed legislation?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the primary role of any government is to protect its citizens from terrorist threats, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are doing so in co-operation with the provincial and territorial governments. That is why I have had many discussions with Minister Thériault from Quebec, as well as other representatives from the provinces.

We will continue to ensure that police forces and intelligence services work together to protect Canadians. Our government and the Quebec government are on the same wavelength on this.

* * *

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a report published today by the Environmental Law Centre of the University of Victoria raises very troubling questions about the so-called political activities audits being undertaken by the Canada Revenue Agency. It analyzes the alarming lack of clarity in the rules governing political activities for charities. It is now clear the government must immediately suspend these audits and fix the broken system.

Will the Conservatives finally put a stop to this and clean up the mess they have created?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member knows full well that CRA audits occur at arm's length from government. They are conducted free of any political interference or motivation. The CRA charities directorate acts independently. The rules regarding charities and political activities are long standing, and charities must respect the law.

It really is shameful that this member continues to politicize a matter that is free of any political interference or motivation.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the credibility of the Canada Revenue Agency is at stake.

The Conservatives are spending \$13.4 million of taxpayers' money to target charities the Conservatives do not like at the same time as they are cutting \$200 million from the overall budget of the CRA. It is very troubling.

The recommendations in this report deserve serious attention. Instead, we just hear more denials from this minister. But she is responsible for the credibility of the CRA. Will she ever take action?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the director general of the charities directorate has stated:

As I have made clear in the past, the process for identifying which charities will be audited (for any reason) is handled by the Directorate itself and is not subject to political direction.

The CRA audits 1% of the charitable sector every year. This means, on average, only 0.4% of all charities end up having their status revoked, for whatever reason.

The only politics in this story are the shameful political motivations of the NDP.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the minister's talking points, but the University of Victoria's Environmental Law Centre raised some troubling facts in its report. Some 52 organizations, mainly environmental and advocacy groups, are being monitored by the Canada Revenue Agency. It is a veritable witch hunt for purely political purposes.

Will the Conservatives get their priorities straight and deal with tax evasion instead of going after charities?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that the CRA conducts audits independently and without political interference or motivation.

The rules regarding charities and political activities have been in place for a long time. Charities must obey the law. The CRA is legally responsible for ensuring that charitable cash donations made by charitable Canadians are used for charitable purposes.

Oral Questions

●(1440)

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Canada Revenue Agency is not wasting its time going after environmental groups, it gets mailing addresses mixed up and sends personal information to the wrong people.

In 2014, CRA employees used the wrong mailing address 3,800 times. In other words, more than 1 million Canadians' personal information has been compromised since the Conservatives came to power.

When will this government fix this problem?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we agree with Canadians who rightfully expect that their personal information should be protected when dealing with the CRA. We expect the CRA to have a close working relationship with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner and to act on all his recommendations. Ninety-five percent of the reported privacy issues are related to misdirected mail, as the CRA handles over 150 million pieces of correspondence every year.

That said, we expect the CRA to improve on how it deals with the personal information of Canadians.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, check this out. In the last two years, the Canada Revenue Agency has had more data breaches than all other government agencies combined over the last 10 years.

Now, that minister just does not seem to understand the importance of protecting the personal financial information of Canadians.

I have a simple question. Why is the minister using the tax department as the political enforcement arm of the Conservative Party? Why is she attacking birdwatchers, environmentalists, and Oxfam, when she should be dealing with the appalling record of lost, stolen, and compromised data that is happening in her department under her incompetent nose?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 95% of the privacy incidents reported by CRA are related to misdirected mail. That being said, more serious incidents related to lost or stolen data and unauthorized accesses are completely unacceptable. My expectation is that CRA work closely with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner and implement all his recommendations to ensure confidential information remains protected.

As I said before, that party knows there is no political interference in charitable audits, as has been stated over and over again.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past week, both the OECD and TD have sharply cut their economic outlook for Canada. TD's new forecast for 2015 has Canada losing \$22 billion from our economy compared to the bank's projections from just three months ago. TD warns unemployment will rise, wage growth will stall and household debt will mount.

When will the Minister of Finance stop playing hide and seek with the House and personally tell us what his plan is to reverse this painful economic decline?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is called the low-tax plan for jobs, and it is working. There were 1.2 million net new jobs, with 85% of them in the full-time category and two-thirds of them in high-wage sectors.

The Liberal plan is to raise taxes on those who create jobs and to raise taxes on middle-class families. That would send shockwaves throughout our economy. It would kill jobs and set families back. We will not let the Liberals do it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would ask members at the far end of the chamber to come to order when the minister is answering the question.

The hon. member for Bourassa.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the mayors of Montreal and Toronto met today, and what did they talk about? They talked about infrastructure. The late Jim Flaherty himself said that it is the best way to stimulate job creation and growth.

The Conservatives have since cut 90% of these expenditures, and reports are showing that employment in Canada is precarious. This government does not have a plan, and the minister is missing in action in this matter.

When will the Conservatives commit to reversing the cuts in infrastructure?

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, I met with the mayors of Montreal and Toronto. What did they talk to me about? They talked about infrastructure and they congratulated us on our plan, the longest and largest infrastructure plan in Canada's history. That is why I met with them.

●(1445)

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they like the plan, but they would rather have the money.

The mayors of Toronto and Montreal met today. The cities are often seen as rivals, but what has them united? Mayor Tory and Mayor Coderre. The great cities have been united because they got absolutely nothing from the federal government for the last two years from the new infrastructure build fund. However, they do have a lot of photo ops, a lot of billboards, but nothing when it comes to a cheque being cashed.

Oral Questions

When will the Conservative government send a budget to the cities? Why will the Minister of Finance not come out from under his desk, quit hiding and deliver a budget that funds infrastructure, creates jobs and creates growth?

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, as we have said before, the new building Canada fund is very important. The infrastructure plan is there.

I will explain the gas tax fund. As a former city councillor, he probably already knows, but I will repeat it. Two times a year, in July and November, we transfer to the provinces and territories the money from the gas tax fund. Two billion dollars a year have been transferred to municipalities and provinces.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's utter disregard for veterans continues to take its toll. Over the past three years, the Conservatives have cut the number of case managers for veterans by 20%. Those who are left are struggling to deal with unmanageable caseloads. This has a major impact on the quality of care and services that veterans receive.

Veterans and members of Parliament warned that this would be the outcome of Conservative cuts. Why did the Conservatives fail to listen? When will they make amends?

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to make investments in front-line services and support our case managers for veterans. By the end of this year, due to our investments, the veterans and their families will have up to 26 operational stress injury clinics scattered throughout the country.

In the last few weeks I have also expressed our interest to bring out the retirement income security benefit. We are bringing respect and parity for our reserve forces. We are providing the family caregiver relief benefit.

We are moving to support our veterans and their families. I hope the opposition finally stops the rhetoric and gets behind it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not know what "respect for our veterans" means. Our soldiers who suffered traumatic injuries while protecting our country deserve to have access to the services they need.

However, the government had no qualms about reducing the number of case workers from 309 to 254. That is a 20% reduction. The people who help our soldiers are overwhelmed.

What is the government waiting for to reverse that senseless decision?

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as that member would know, in the last two weeks we have actually expanded benefits and programs for our most seriously injured. We have made a major expansion for eligibility to the

permanent impairment allowance for our critically injured. For their families, we are giving the family caregiver relief benefit. These are real benefits that will come to the House. I hope that member will stand in the House and vote for these outstanding benefits for veterans and their families.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, all the parties voted unanimously for the NDP motion that would eliminate microbeads and put an end to the pollution of our waterways.

Now, we need to follow the example of the American states and the other countries that have taken action in this regard. Promising to organize a meeting on the issue is not enough. That is not taking action.

What is the government's concrete plan to put an end to the use of microbeads and protect our environment?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's motion received unanimous consent.

Environment Canada is initiating a scientific review to assess the effects of microbeads on the environment. This panel of experts will document future action on microbeads. Our government has come up with an innovative chemicals management plan to prioritize microbeads for assessment, which will benefit all Canadians.

We are going to work in co-operation with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, and we support including the issue of microbeads on the agenda for the council meeting this summer.

● (1450)

[*English*]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we did not agree to more study; we agreed to action. The motion was clear and it called on the government to list microbeads as a toxic substance under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. Instead of promising real action, all the Conservatives are saying is that they are going to try to add it to the agenda of a meeting. We did not vote on that.

Do the Conservatives plan to stand by their vote or are they just trying to weasel their way out of responsibility for protection of the environment?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only weaseling is by the NDP members who will not respect science. We are taking a leadership role when it comes to protecting our environment. Environment Canada is initiating a scientific review to assess the effects of microbeads on the environment. It is this expert advice that will inform future potential actions on microbeads.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now that we are balancing our budget, we are helping all families balance theirs. On that side of the House, the Liberal leader says that he will raise taxes on every family. The only ones who benefit from the NDP plan are big bureaucracies.

Could the Minister of Employment and Social Development please tell us what our government is doing to help all Canadian families?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I was at the Sandy Hill Child Care centre celebrating the legislation we will introduce Friday to increase the universal child care benefit, those monthly cheques that people get, to almost \$2,000 for preschoolers and \$720 for kids 6 through 17.

The Liberals and NDP have voted against these initiatives in the past. They are going to oppose them again. We know they would take that money away to give it to the so-called experts. We are going to give that money to the eight million real child care experts out there whose names are mom and dad.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was revealed today that during a meeting with chiefs last week in Calgary, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development said that indigenous men were responsible for 70%—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The member for Churchill now has the floor. Other members who wish to persist in this can sit on the very comfortable couches in the lobby. There they would only torment the whips' assistants instead of other members.

The hon. member for Churchill has the floor.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, it was revealed today that during a meeting with chiefs last week in Calgary, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs said that indigenous men were responsible for 70% of the murders of indigenous women. He told them that this was unreleased RCMP data, but we all know that the number quoted is not backed up by any of the RCMP reports.

Will the minister stand in the House and release the data on which he based his claim, or will he get up and tell us that he made this number up to suit the Conservatives' discriminatory agenda?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed, last week I toured the Prairies and met with several first nations chiefs, councillors and stakeholders to discuss a wide range of issues. While I do not disclose the specifics of closed-door meetings, I can assure the hon. member that the discussions were productive, and our government will continue to work with first nations to address these issues.

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): The government will never learn from its mistakes, Mr. Speaker. After ramming through its plan to do away with regional environmental boards in the Northwest Territories, the Conservatives are now stalled by an injunction handed to them by the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories and they will likely face the same kind of legal action from Yukon first nations over Bill S-6.

When will the Conservatives get it? Gutting environmental protection and altering land claims agreements just simply lead to more uncertainty and legal actions.

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess I missed the question.

Unlike previous Liberal governments, this Conservative government has made the long-term prosperity of Canada's north and northerners a priority. This includes fostering economic development, among others, by improving Yukon and Nunavut regulatory systems, while protecting our environmental heritage. That is what Bill S-6 would do, and I encourage him to support it.

* * *

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

PENSIONS

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a study by the Université de Montréal confirms that the Conservatives' old age security reform will increase inequalities among seniors and create more poverty.

We know full well that at the end of the day, changing the retirement age from 65 to 67 will only delay the payment of benefits. Ultimately, this measure will do nothing but make things harder for seniors.

Why is the minister maintaining this reform now that he knows it will achieve nothing?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only plan the New Democrats and the Liberals have for seniors is to increase taxes. Seniors have worked their entire lives. They do not need to be penalized with more taxes.

That is why we have taken 380,000 seniors off the tax rolls by increasing the amount they can earn without paying taxes. We also created the tax-free savings account, which helps seniors have tax-free income.

We will continue to serve our seniors.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Seniors, because the Conservative government has been absolutely cynical in its treatment of seniors.

According to a recent study from the Université de Montréal, raising the age of eligibility for old age security will significantly increase poverty and inequality among Canadian seniors. This will have a serious negative impact on the health and life expectancy of poor seniors.

Will the Minister of State for Seniors stand in her place and tell Canadians why she is insisting on pursuing this offensive policy that will increase poverty and destroy the quality of life for our most vulnerable seniors?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's seniors have worked hard all their lives. The last thing they need is a tax increase from the Liberals and the NDP, both of which have promised to eliminate pension splitting and bring in a carbon tax that would raise the price of all the household goods and heating and utilities that seniors have to pay and would push them back into poverty.

We have lifted 380,000 seniors off the tax rolls altogether by raising the personal exemption. We have brought in the tax-free savings account, which allows them to have tax-free income to put right in their pockets. We have cut every tax that the government collects to leave more money in the pockets of our seniors and we are going to keep doing it.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite the minister's shabby rhetoric today, despite his repeated assurances that spending cuts at Veterans Affairs will not affect veterans, he is wrong. Since 2011, Veterans Affairs has cut one out of every four staff members right across the country, and these layoffs are definitely affecting front-line services. In fact, the government cut almost one of every five caseworkers, leaving a smaller group struggling under their workload. Veterans are the ones paying the price, and I have news for the minister: if they do not have a caseworker, they will not get to an operational stress clinic.

Will the minister reverse his callous neglect of our veterans and rehire the—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to make investments in front-line services and work to make sure that caseworkers who are working with veterans and their families have the support and the allocation of cases they need so that they do not have too much burden from some of the challenges with mental health cases. Those cases are being assisted by our rapid rollout of operational stress injury clinics from coast to coast.

In the last few weeks I have announced some benefits. In many ways we are fixing the gaps in the Liberals' new veterans charter, so I

hope the member's rhetoric will be matched by her willingness to stand in the House and support veterans and their families.

* * *

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, the government set up a \$200 million fund to support advanced manufacturing in Ontario, but as of now, it has not spent one penny. Since the government came to office, Ontario manufacturing jobs are down a staggering 25% and exports down 20%, yet Conservatives have not spent a penny of the fund.

Is the Prime Minister so disconnected from the economy that he no longer cares about struggling middle-class Canadians in the manufacturing sector?

● (1500)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is perfectly clear the member is describing his own leader when it was the Liberal leader who said that southern Ontario needs to transition “away from manufacturing-based employment as a driver in the economy”. That is what the Liberal leader said.

By contrast, I visited SickKids hospital in Toronto last week and visited some advanced manufacturing in robotics that we invested in. One in 700 children is born with a cleft palate. Because of the investment we have made in advanced manufacturing, this is technology that is protecting kids, stopping infection, and fixing cleft palates. We are going to sell this technology all over the world, creating jobs and protecting kids well into the future. That is what we do as the Conservative government.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have mismanaged B.C.'s herring fishery into a state of crisis. Without warning or consultation, the DFO opened a herring fishery near Bella Bella on the central coast. Local first nations, the UFAW, and fishery experts have raised serious concerns about its sustainability, but the government refuses to listen.

Why are the Conservatives ignoring experts and the Heiltsuk First Nation and putting this herring fishery in jeopardy?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear that we do respect the right to protest. However, we expect that it be done without any threat to fishermen or their property.

Science forecasts have shown that the Pacific herring stock abundance continues to support moderate commercial harvest opportunities while meeting conservation objectives. The Pacific herring fishery is under way. The openings are based on science and follow the precautionary approach.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

QUEBEC BRIDGE

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned this morning that CN commissioned a study on repainting the Quebec Bridge and that it would cost more than \$400 million. That is double what the government thought when it promised \$75 million, which, I remind members, is conditional on CN's participation.

Has the minister spoken with CN since the announcement? Did he know that CN was conducting a study? What does he plan on doing with this study? When will the minister finally find a solution and fix the problem once and for all?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the owner of the bridge, Canadian National is responsible for its maintenance and for its upgrade.

However, we have been very clear here on this side of the House. We have committed significant funding to repaint the Quebec Bridge. The province and the municipalities have also put forward money for that, and we asked CN to come to the table on this specific project to commit the other funds that are necessary to get this project done.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the RCMP announced that it had arrested an individual in Prince Edward Island who had plans to commit acts of terrorism. The RCMP has confirmed that it had grounds to suspect that he intended to commit a terrorist offence.

Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness please update this House on this situation?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the question from the hon. member for Saint John. I would like to thank the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for its work on this case and the other cases it is working on.

It is clear that terrorism remains a real threat to Canadians. That is why we have tabled the anti-terrorism act, 2015.

[Translation]

Since the case is before the courts, I will leave this in the hands of the RCMP, but I can assure Canadians that we will continue to implement concrete measures to protect them from the terrorist threat.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that Canada has been invited by China to join its newly created Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The Liberal Party feels that there are good reasons for Canada to accept

this invitation, which, as members know, is involved with funding of infrastructure projects in Asia.

We understand that the invitation is extended until the end of the month. We know that France, Germany, and Great Britain have joined the bank. Is the government seriously considering this invitation from China?

● (1505)

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our ties with China, both commercial as well as heritage, have improved dramatically. We have just recently announced the renminbi trading hub in Canada, which will help businesses. We are continuing to look at this possible bank venture as well.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government cannot continue to ignore the *Komagata Maru* tragedy. The Prime Minister has refused to agree to our demand for an apology in the House. It is a shameful moment in Canadian history that must be honoured with a formal apology from the Canadian government.

Today the Punjab assembly passed a resolution seeking an apology from Canada. It is clear that until there is an apology this wound cannot be healed.

The Prime Minister sidestepped this question earlier today. Here is another opportunity for him. Will the government finally apologize for the *Komagata Maru* tragedy?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the tragic events of the *Komagata Maru* were truly a regrettable chapter in Canada's history. That is why this Prime Minister and this government were the very first to acknowledge what happened to the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* on behalf of all Canadians.

It is this Conservative government that worked with the Khalsa Diwan Society to build a museum around this tragedy, and also a monument and a number of other projects to educate Canadians. On the 100th anniversary of that tragedy, Canada Post released a special stamp to further create awareness about this tragedy.

While we are educating and creating awareness about this tragedy, those opposite continue to play politics with it.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that they can count on our government to deliver real results. To support job creation and economic growth, our Conservative government has been making record investments in infrastructure projects across Canada.

Can the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the regional minister for Prince Edward Island update this House on how our government is investing to support energy delivery to P.E.I.?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week our government announced we will invest over \$50 million from the green infrastructure fund for new electricity cables to Prince Edward Island. This is the most significant infrastructure project for the island since the Confederation Bridge. It will support jobs and economic growth by providing more power and cleaner energy to islanders.

Years of Liberal governments never delivered a cable. All they have done there is talk. I am extremely proud to be part of the Conservative government that has delivered to islanders.

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RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives refuse to act, passenger services on the Algoma Central Railway will end on Tuesday.

Northern Ontario businesses—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. There has been a steady cacophony from the far end of the chamber all of question period. I was hoping that with a week and a half left in Lent, members might have given up heckling for Lent. Maybe we can get into the Christmas spirit. It is nine months from Christmas today, so they can think about that.

There are only a couple of questions left. Let us come to order.

The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives refuse to act, passenger services on the Algoma Central Railway will end on Tuesday.

Northern Ontario businesses and communities rely on this service to support the local economy and hundreds of jobs. The working group has done its job and found a third party. With a little help from the federal government, passenger services on the ACR could be self-sustaining in five short years.

Everyone is waiting for an answer. Why is the government dragging its feet? Will the minister commit to the future of this passenger service to ensure the survival of this vital economy?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me an opportunity to highlight the great work that our member of Parliament on this side of the House has been doing, constantly making sure that we have appropriate information.

The fact of the matter is that the information for this new line is with Transport Canada officials, who have to review it in its entirety to make sure that it is a safe operation. From there, they also have to make an application to the Canadian transportation review.

With those two pieces of information, going forward we will be able to provide the House with updates as these things unfold.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. It relates to Canada's support for Ukraine.

We all join the Prime Minister in condemning Putin's aggression, but the extent of Canada's involvement with Ukraine does not appear on the DFATD website. We learned through the media of RADARSAT-2 data being provided to Ukraine, initially over the objections of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of National Defence.

I hear that there may be memorandum of understanding between Canada and Ukraine. I would like the Prime Minister to confirm that and let the House know when it will be tabled with Parliament.

● (1510)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear throughout this that Canada is standing with the people of Ukraine in the face of Vladimir Putin's military aggression and we have made significant contributions directly to Ukraine. We have been part of the NATO assurance package.

Whether it takes five months or 50 years, we will stand with the people of Ukraine for their independence and their freedom.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Consular, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled "Amendment to Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade", adopted at Geneva, April 28 to May 10, 2013, and the "Second Protocol amending the Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Air Transport", done at Beijing on November 8, 2014.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to seven petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS**

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations in relation to the review of statutory instruments.

*Routine Proceedings***FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT**

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-660, an act to amend the Financial Administration Act, balanced budget and public debt repayment.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise and table an act to amend the Financial Administration Act for balanced budgets and debt repayment. This legislation, if adopted, would provide for statutory requirements for the government to table a balanced budget and repay the over \$640 billion in public debt.

This legislation allows for a 3.5% cushion or contingency fund for normal contingencies, and allows an exception for a deficit in times of exceptional circumstances, provided that the Minister of Finance clearly explains those extraordinary circumstances to this House. Significantly, surpluses would be statutorily used to pay down the public debt in an orderly manner. Governments would be unable to use windfalls to go on spending sprees.

The government, since the 2013 throne speech, has promised balanced budget legislation but has yet to deliver on that promise, notwithstanding reminders from this member.

Accordingly, I encourage the government to honour its pledge to prudent fiscal planning. I encourage all hon. members to support the balanced budget and public debt repayment act.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 16th report on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights presented in this House yesterday, March 24, 2015, 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?

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, in the opinion of the House, Sergei Magnitsky, a Moscow lawyer who uncovered the largest tax fraud in Russian history, was detained without trial, tortured and consequently died in a Moscow prison on November 16, 2009;

No thorough, independent and objective investigation has been conducted by Russian authorities into the detention, torture and death of Sergei Magnitsky, nor have the individuals responsible been brought to justice;

The unprecedented posthumous trial and conviction of Sergei Magnitsky in Russia for the very fraud he uncovered constitute a violation of the principles of fundamental justice and the rule of law;

Therefore the House calls upon the government to:

Condemn any foreign nationals who were responsible for the detention, torture or death of Sergei Magnitsky, or who have been involved in covering up the crimes he exposed;

Explore and encourage sanctions against any foreign nationals who were responsible for the detention, torture or death of Sergei Magnitsky or who have been involved in covering up the crimes he exposed;

Explore sanctions as appropriate against any foreign nationals responsible for violations of internationally recognized human rights in a foreign country, when authorities in that country are unable or unwilling to conduct a thorough, independent and objective investigation of the violations.

● (1515)

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?

(Motion agreed to)

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PETITIONS

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today from a number of Canadians requesting that the impaired driving laws of the country be strengthened. Petitioners feel they are too lenient and believe the laws, particularly impaired driving causing death, need to be strengthened.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today of presenting a petition signed by literally thousands of citizens from my riding of Burnaby—Douglas and across British Columbia. The petitioners call on the federal government to oppose the new Kinder Morgan oil pipeline that would run right through Burnaby. The signatories note that this export-only crude oil pipeline brings massive environmental and economic risk but no real benefits for local residents.

This is without a doubt the number one issue facing Burnaby and my office has never received so many petitions before from constituents. While I know the Conservatives and Liberals both support the new Kinder Morgan pipeline, I urge the government to take this call to oppose the pipeline very seriously.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two separate petitions today, both dealing with the issue of impaired driving. These citizens want to see tougher laws and the implementation of mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death. They are also asking that the Criminal Code of Canada be changed to redefine the offence of impaired driving causing death as vehicular manslaughter.

Routine Proceedings

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from students at the University of Victoria calling on the House to reject Bill C-51, the so-called anti-terrorism bill of 2015.

Students call on all members to join with the NDP caucus in voting down this deeply flawed legislation. The students are not alone. They stand with prime ministers, Supreme Court of Canada justices, legal experts, privacy commissioners and the like. They stand with hundreds more who have written letters, attended meetings and spoken out across Canada, including on the streets of Victoria.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have four petitions.

The first one calls on the government to bring in tougher impaired driving laws, particularly around the implementation of mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions calling on the House of Commons to commit to adopting international aid policies that support small family farmers and ensure that these policies and programs are developed in consultation with small family farmers and that they protect the rights of small family farmers in the global south to preserve, use and freely exchange seeds.

I have a fourth petition, which is basically the same as the last ones, other than it is calling on Canada to enshrine in legislation the inalienable rights of farmers and other Canadians to save, reuse, select, exchange and sell seeds and that the government refrain from making changes to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act.

[*Translation*]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today it is my honour to present a petition signed by hundreds of people from my riding and neighbouring ridings.

They are calling on the government to guarantee stable, adequate, multi-year financing for our public broadcaster to allow the CBC to live up to its mandate from coast to coast to coast. They are very disappointed by the cuts the Conservatives have made and are asking the government to restore the funding.

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition signed by 2,619 Canadians calling for the swift passage and all-party support of Bill S-219, the journey to freedom day act.

MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition on behalf of my constituents in Surrey and Newton. The petitioners are calling on the

government to create a ministry for people with disabilities and mental health issues. This petition has gathered hundreds of signatures in my riding and this is about the fifth time I have presented this petition in the House.

The petitioners feel there are very limited after-hours and weekend programs offered to those with disabilities or mental health problems. Like the petitioners, I want to see real leadership on mental health. Of those with mental health issues, only one-third who need services in Canada actually receive them. New Democrats agree we need to ensure that Canadians who are living with mental illness have access to the supports they need.

● (1520)

PUBLIC SAFETY

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

The first is from residents of my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands, as well as Victoria, Winnipeg and Toronto. The petitioners call on the House of Commons to reject Bill C-51, the so-called anti-terrorism act, as a violation of Canadians' rights and freedoms, while at the same time not making us more safe.

HOUSING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on the subject of affordable housing. It comes with over 250 signatures from residents of my riding who are calling for the House to take the advice of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and put in place a national affordable housing program.

[*Translation*]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have here the signatures of several hundred people who want to support the CBC now that the Conservative government and the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages have abandoned our public broadcaster.

It is high time they chose to help and support our public broadcaster as it addresses the challenges of technological change. The petitioners are therefore calling on the government to guarantee stable, adequate, multi-year financing for our public broadcaster to allow the CBC to live up to its mandate from coast to coast to coast.

[*English*]

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present two petitions.

Government Orders

The first petition sadly acknowledges that there are 200 million missing girls in the world right now due to the practice of sex selection, known as gendercide, and 92% of Canadians believe that gendercide and sex selection is wrong. They are calling upon Parliament to condemn this wicked practice.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition sadly notifies the House that 25-year-old Danille Kerpan was tragically killed by a drunk driver, a driver who chose to drive while impaired. Her family was devastated. Danille's family is part of Families for Justice, a group that believes that the impaired driving laws in Canada are much too lenient. The petitioners want the crime to be called what it is, that is, vehicular homicide. They also want the government to introduce legislation that would have mandatory sentencing for that type of crime.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise and table a petition containing 33 signatures of constituents of Edmonton—St. Albert calling upon the government to pass a resolution to stop measures against the Chinese Communist regime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners and publicly calling for an end to the persecution of the Falun Gong in China.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I table a petition today signed by Winnipeggers dealing with the situation in Ethiopia. With a population of 90 million, Ethiopia is an important strategic partner to the western governments and is a host to the headquarters of the African Union. The petition points out that in April and May of 2014, university students in the state of Orma, Ethiopia, protested peacefully against the government's development plan to evict millions of farmers from ancestral lands without any prior consultation. In part, the petitioners are calling upon the Canadian government to request that the Ethiopian government's legal system bring the perpetrators of excessive force to justice.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the supplementary response to Question No. 952, originally tabled on March 23, 2015, 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. 952—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With respect to the government's legal obligations under the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement to provide full mental health, cultural, and emotional supports to each individual going through the Independent Assessment Process (IAP), broken down by each year that the IAP has been conducted and by region: (a) what was the budget for these programs; (b) how much of this money was spent; (c) if additional money was required, how much and was it spent; (d) what services were provided and for what period of time; (e) what limitations were set on the services that were provided; (f) how many counsellors were approved to provide supports; (g) what was the average case-load of the approved counsellors; (h) what is the capacity

for approved counsellors to take on additional clients; (i) how many approved counsellors had full caseloads; (j) how many clients are in need of services but not being provided with them; (k) how many applications for services were denied; (l) what is the average wait time for an initial assessment; and (m) what is the average delay in reviewing these requests for funding?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that the notice of motion for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1525)

[English]

TOUGHER PENALTIES FOR CHILD PREDATORS ACT

The House resumed from February 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Sex Offender Information Registration Act, to enact the High Risk Child Sex Offender Database Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking has three minutes remaining to conclude her remarks.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Newton—North Delta.

I must say that I never thought it would be a full month before I had the opportunity to finish three minutes of my remarks on Bill C-26.

As I stated in February, this is an issue that affects all of us. It is impossible to imagine that anybody in society supports the kinds of offenders we are discussing. I will also remind the House that these predators do not just prey on young people; they prey on all people.

Government Orders

As I mentioned in the first part of my speech, I worked at Probation and Parole Services in Ontario for 13 years. My daughter and her partner are correctional officers at the Roy McMurtry Youth Centre and work mostly with level one offenders. I know from first-hand experience the importance of rehabilitation and prevention, and how it allows us to better deal with the reintegration of individuals who are eventually released back into the general population.

New Democrats are not opposed to this legislation, but have concerns that need to be addressed in this process to ensure we are pursuing the right measures while also providing the tools to ensure it will actually be effective. This is important because the government's record to date has given us crime legislation, but has shown a weakness when it comes to providing the resources needed to do the job properly. The bill is a perfect example of that.

As we debated this a month ago, we had only just learned how more than \$10 million earmarked for the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre went unused. Therefore, we found ourselves debating legislation to better deal with sex offenders, which is extremely important, but also digesting the fact that the money allocated to do some of that for initiatives that were already in place was left on the table by the government.

Cynics will ask if that was intentional. If that is how one builds a surplus these days, I guess that is the way the government likes to go. Surely, being tough on crime should amount to more than just uttering the phrase.

I am reminded of that old TV commercial with the catch phrase, "Where's the beef?" It is important that the Canadian public understands that about the current government and it is probably more important that we look out for that kind of mixed commitment when it comes to dealing with these offenders.

I will close by reminding the House that research shows that treatment of sex offenders does make a difference, that sex offenders who receive treatment are less likely to reoffend. In fact, offenders who do not receive treatment reoffend at a rate of 17%. For those who have received treatment, the number drops to 10%.

While New Democrats will be supporting the legislation, we would like to see the money earmarked for finding offenders spent and we would like to see an honest attempt at rehabilitation that will ultimately help protect potential future victims as these offenders re-enter society.

As I indicated, it is important to invest in resources to ensure that when offenders are actually released into the community, the proper treatment and rehabilitation processes are in place. It is not by cutting those services that we will be able to be successful.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would go right to the Prime Minister's Office, which came up with the name for this particular legislation. The PMO chose to call this piece of legislation tougher penalties for child predators.

The member made reference, in her closing remarks, to millions of dollars that were not spent. When we look at child exploitation, a great deal of it occurs on the Internet, as we know, and yet there has been the underspending of significant amounts of dollars that could have gone a long way in dealing with the issue at hand.

We have the Prime Minister of Canada saying one thing in terms of the name of a piece of legislation, but saying another thing when the Minister of Finance wants to collect money not being spent, at a great cost.

I am wondering if the member might want to expand on that point. In other words, it is tough talk, but there is very little happening in terms of action.

● (1530)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the government has actually saved \$10 million, which was allocated to the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre. When funding is not used, that is supposed to be used to protect the public, then there is a problem, only because the Conservatives want to pay down their deficit and make themselves look good. That is quite problematic.

The other thing we need to realize is that the federal government also recently announced that it is cutting the measly \$650,000 in funding that it offers to Correctional Service Canada. Again, these are dollars that went toward trying to put some offenders back on the right track.

In addition, there is the circles of support and accountability program that receives funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre, which is also set to end this fall. Again, the government is not putting the money where its mouth is, and when it does put money on the table, it quickly pulls it back.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for many members of Parliament and certainly for many of the people I represent in the northwest of British Columbia, this issue strikes at the heart of some of the most grievous offences we can imagine, sexually harming young children.

It is important for a government to take on this issue. It is of public importance. One would think that this importance would carry right through, beyond the announcements, photo ops, and crafting of the title of a new bill into the actual delivery of the program.

On the preventative side, as my friend has pointed out, \$10 million would have gone a long way to protecting our kids and going after some of these offenders. Then on the rehabilitation front, unless the government's plan is, and so far it is not, to lock everybody up forever, we need to do the rehabilitation so offenders do not commit the crimes again.

If the government does not spend the money on the prevention and does not spend the money on actual treatment, so that people do not cause harm again, what can it possibly say to the victims, the future victims who are ensnared in one of the traps set by these predators?

If the government simply says that it has decided to put the money into deficit cuts instead and that it does not have any money for treatment as it is for other more important things, what could it say to those families and those kids?

Government Orders

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to funding, we need to ensure that we actually spend it in the right direction and that we put it where it belongs. We also need to ensure that it is actually used. The Conservatives can purport to support victims, but at the same time they turn around and do not fund any of the programs properly.

Let us look at the circles of support and accountability program. All in all the program costs \$2.2 million a year and it is help rehabilitate offenders. It has 700 volunteers across the country who meet with offenders after they are released to help them find jobs and places to live, or to just catch up over coffee.

This is to provide them the proper support and to keep them on the right track, and here, the government is looking at cutting funding. Is that not shameful?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-26, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Sex Offender Information Registration Act, to enact the high risk child sex offender database act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

We are talking about a very serious issue. I can tell members that as a parent, mother, grandmother and as a teacher, I take this issue very seriously, as I am sure does every other member in this House. There is nothing that is more offensive or heinous than the impact of sexual exploitation of children. I am sure, whether one sits on this side or that side of the House, all of us are impacted by this greatly.

During my years as a teacher, I had to deal with some pretty sensitive and horrible situations. In that context, there is absolutely nothing that is more gut wrenching than when a child reports a sexual assault molestation. As a teacher and counsellor, I took that very seriously, and the pain stays for a long time. In a similar way, as a parent, one cannot imagine the pain or even the thought of the sexual molestation of one's child. It causes very deep, unimaginable pain.

On this side of the House, as I hope on all sides of the House on this issue, we take this issue very seriously. We have a zero tolerance policy when it comes to sexual offences against children.

I am so proud of my party that it has taken this position, as it has held this position for a long time. It is because of that, that we are supporting the bill before us, but at the same time acknowledging that it contains deficiencies. It is not perfect. We are disappointed that the bill does not go further by offering truly effective measures to protect children and keep our communities safe.

I am hoping that not all of my colleagues here have had to deal with instances of serious sex offences in their ridings. We had one in September 2014. It shook the city of Surrey when 17-year-old Serena Vermeersch went missing and then she was found. A high-risk sex offender was charged. Surrey RCMP Chief Fordy said:

Serena should be at Sullivan Heights [her school] having a laugh with classmates and thinking about graduation. Sadly that is not the case. These types of crimes galvanize our community and touch them in an incredible way.

Even today, every time I think of Serena, my heart goes out to her family, friends, neighbours, and the whole Surrey community because I know the pain and anguish everyone went through.

As I said, we will be voting in favour of the bill, but once again, it seems that the government is really into optics. Here we have another bill that purports to do something, but then it is missing or lacking the resources that are needed in order to actually implement it.

It is very difficult for service providers when we as parliamentarians pass legislation and want them to carry out and enforce the new laws we make, but we do not give them the tools they need.

• (1535)

I am sure many of them are absolutely sick to death of hearing us or others, like their employers, telling them to do more with less. In the conversations I have had with RCMP members and other front-line service providers, it is very difficult for them to do more with less. They are feeling really stretched.

When we look at legislation like this, which purports to seriously address sexual offences against minors and our children, we really need look at where we were and what we have done. Ever since the Conservatives, and even the Liberals, have been in power, many pieces of legislation have been passed. At justice committee, the Minister of Justice stated that sexual offences against children had increased 6% over the past two years. This is quite staggering. This is after the Conservative government has taken many steps.

We need to listen to experts and informed opinion. We need to ask if some of the repressive measures that have been taken so far are working. Obviously, they are not. Are the resources there? As well as punishment, what are we doing in the area of rehabilitation and healing? What are we doing to support those who are the victims?

This is such a sensitive area. I do not want to politicize it.

We also have to ensure that the RCMP, which we charge with responsibility for much of this area, has the resources for a registry and budgets to support victims. Just having nice words on a piece of paper to say that we are all for victims and that we will provide support for victims does not make it happen.

I can remember the NDP fighting very hard for the Circles of Support and Accountability program, which was real and tangible. It was being used very effectively. Here is a quote from Steve Sullivan:

—the federal government recently announced it was cutting the measly \$650,000 in funding Corrections Canada provides. CoSA also receives funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre; that's also set to end this fall. In total, the program costs \$2.2 million a year.

Government Orders

Like most community-based victim services, CoSA is a fairly cheap program. It has 700 volunteers across the country; they meet with offenders after their release, help them find jobs and places to live, meet with them regularly for coffee. They support offenders as they start to live normal lives, ones that don't involve new victims. They hold them accountable.

The Conservative government left money unspent when it came to child protection. I get so offended when it calls itself champions of protecting our children.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned that the number of cases of abuse has grown in recent years.

Can she go into more detail about why that number has gone up despite the fact that the Conservatives like to talk about how they are dealing with the issue?

[*English*]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, since I have been in the House, I often have heard a lot of rhetoric. We pass legislation, but we do not provide the necessary resources. When it comes to sexual predators and sexual violation of our children, we need to provide support for the victims, but there also needs to be punishment and consequences. Also, we know there has to be some level of rehabilitation because if we do not do that, the chances of repeat offences are more likely to happen.

The government had \$10 million in funds earmarked for its national child exploitation coordination centre and related projects. Those funds went unspent. That really begs this question. How serious is the government about its anti-child pornography agenda?

• (1545)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the good fortune of being a parliamentarian at the provincial and federal levels for a number of years. Through that we have seen significant changes in the exploitation of children in a very negative way. That comes in the form of the Internet. The number of children who are exploited continues to grow year after year, and it is important we do more.

It is more than just legislation. The member made reference to the issue of financing. I made reference to that in the first question I had a few minutes ago in regard to the government's inability to ensure that, at the ground level, the RCMP was equipped to deal with the growth of child exploitation on the Internet.

The government and the Prime Minister need to be more proactive in dealing with it at the ground level. By the ground level, I am talking about getting feet on the ground, providing the RCMP and other law enforcement agencies with the necessary resources to achieve the desired impact that Canadians expect of the government in terms of leadership on this file. Would the member agree?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely need to ensure that our service providers and front line intervention have the resources they need. If we do not give them the tools they need, then we are remiss in our duties and responsibilities when we pass legislation.

On this side of the House, we believe we need concrete and truly effective measures to protect our children from sexual abuse and to make our communities safer. We need more resources to prevent crime and combat sexual abuse against children. Tougher prison sentences alone are not enough. We want the the government to be open and willing to work with the opposition parties and experts to improve the bills it tables in Parliament, especially when they target vulnerable groups such as children, instead of the mantra of the Conservatives, which is "my way or the highway".

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak in support of Bill C-26, the tougher penalties for child predators act. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Macleod.

Bill C-26 is a part of the government's continuing effort to ensure that child sexual offences result in sentences of imprisonment that denounce the heinous nature of these crimes. We hear the opposition members question the necessity of this bill in light of amendments that this government made in the past, especially those enacted by Bill C-10, the Safe Streets and Communities Act.

The Safe Streets and Communities Act was a good step in the right direction, and Bill C-26 proposes to build on those reforms to fully recognize the devastating impact that these crimes have on the lives of victimized children.

We have heard criticism particularly directed at the effectiveness of mandatory minimum penalties in achieving this objective. A brief discussion about the current sentencing regime in the Criminal Code is warranted in order to explain the necessity of the proposed reforms.

The Criminal Code states that the fundamental purpose of sentencing is to contribute, along with crime prevention initiatives, to the respect for the law and the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society.

In order to achieve this fundamental purpose, a sentence may have the following objectives: denunciation, deterrence, separation of the offender from society when necessary; rehabilitation of the offender; providing reparation for the harm done to the victim or community; the promotion of a sense of responsibility in offenders; and the acknowledgement of the harm done to victims and the community.

It is important to note that a just sentence does not have to reflect all of these sentencing objectives, but only those that are essential to achieve the fundamental purpose of sentencing.

In sentencing offenders for sexual offences committed against children, section 718.01 of the Criminal Code directs courts to consider denunciation and deterrence as the paramount sentencing objectives. How can we as legislators ensure that primary importance is also given to these objectives for these types of crimes?

Government Orders

Both social denunciation of a crime and the deterrence of criminals are achieved in our laws in two ways. First, maximum terms of imprisonment send a clear signal of what punishment is proportionate for the worst offender who commits a crime in the worst circumstances. Second, mandatory minimum terms of imprisonment represent the lowest punishment that we as a society consider important for certain serious crimes.

By increasing both minimum terms of imprisonment and maximum terms of imprisonment for certain sexual offences committed against children, Bill C-26 focuses on denunciation and deterrence and thereby ensures that sentences imposed contribute to a just, peaceful and safe society.

The fundamental objective of a sentence can only be achieved if the sentence imposed is just. According to the Criminal Code, a just sentence is one that is proportionate to the degree of responsibility of the offender and the gravity of the offence. In determining a just sentence, a court must consider the sentencing principles described in the Criminal Code. For example, a sentence must be increased to account for any aggravating factors relating to the offender or the offence.

Two of the listed aggravating factors in subsection 718(a) of the Criminal Code play an important role in child sexual cases.

First, paragraph 718.2(a)(ii.1) of the Criminal Code directs courts to treat the fact that an offender, in committing the offence, abused the person under the age of 18 years of age as an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes.

Second, paragraph 718.2(a)(iii) of the Criminal Code directs the fact of the offender in committing the offence abused a position of trust or authority in relation to the victim also be considered an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes.

Both these aggravating factors further indicate that the significant punishment as proposed by Bill C-26 is justifiable for child predators.

Another important contribution of Bill C-26 rests with the proposed reforms that relate to the imposition of concurrent and consecutive sentences. These amendments would clarify and codify applicable rules in situations where an offender would be sentenced for multiple offences, whether committed against the same victim or not.

Apart from the explicit reference to mandatory consecutive sentences in the context of terrorism acts, criminal organization offences and the use of a firearm in the commission of the offence, the general sentencing principles found in subsection 718.3(4) of the Criminal Code regarding consecutive and concurrent sentences only offer limited guidance to courts.

• (1550)

Bill C-26 proposes to improve on this by, among other things, directing courts to consider ordering that the terms of imprisonment for offences arising out of separate events, or a separate series of events, be served consecutively to one another.

This represents a codification of the rules developed by courts over the years. Courts will generally order that sentences be served

consecutively unless they are committed as part of the same event or series of events, or as some have described it, as part of a criminal transaction. Where several offences are committed as part of the same criminal transaction, the courts will generally determine what is a proportionate sentence for the most serious offence committed and order that the other offences be served concurrently. However, where an offence committed as part of the same criminal transaction is gratuitous or dangerous, courts will generally consider ordering that the sentences be served consecutively to discourage offenders from committing serious offences with impunity.

This approach is codified in Bill C-26 by directing courts to consider ordering consecutive sentences in situations where one of the offences was committed either on judicial interim release or while the accused was fleeing from a peace officer.

The totality principle represents the final step in the determination of whether sentences of imprisonment should be served consecutively. This sentencing principle, described in paragraph 718.2(c) of the Criminal Code, prevents courts from ordering that terms of imprisonment be served one after the other if the combined sentence is unduly long or harsh. Where the combined sentence is, in the court's opinion, unduly long or harsh, it may order that certain terms of imprisonment be served concurrently instead of one after the other.

I understand that in ordering concurrent sentences in such cases, courts intend to craft a combined sentence that is proportionate to the overall responsibility of the offender. However, in the context of sexual offences committed against children, this approach translates into a sentence discount for the offender.

To address this problem, Bill C-26 proposes that sentences of imprisonment for child pornography offences be served consecutively to any sentence imposed at the same time for a contact child sexual offence, and in cases of multiple victims, that sentences imposed at the same time for contact child sexual offences committed against one victim be served consecutively to those imposed for contact child sexual offences committed against any other victim.

Requiring that these terms of imprisonment be served consecutively to one another would send a clear message that every sexual offence committed against children is serious and is clearly unacceptable. These amendments will also send a clear and unequivocal signal that a proportionate sentence is one that acknowledges that every child victim counts.

• (1555)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I asked my colleague this question earlier.

Even though these measures have been taken, the incidence of abuse has gone up by 6% over the past five years. I believe that is the figure. Could my hon. colleague explain why the measures taken so far have not worked?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, an increase in offences against children is certainly all the more reason to send serious messages about the heinous nature of these crimes and how they are totally unacceptable to Parliament and the people of Canada.

Government Orders

The measures we have taken are designed to protect the public and certainly to protect our most vulnerable citizens: children. The face of crime is rapidly changing. There are more and more crimes being done on the Internet. We have to double down to make sure that children are protected.

Keeping repeat child offenders in jail, where they cannot reoffend, is a measure the Canadian public accepts as a valid way of protecting people from such heinous crimes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is a question I have posed to opposition members. I would love to have the hon. member provide a detailed answer, as time allows.

We have a conflict here in the sense that we have legislation with which the Prime Minister's office is trying to send the strong message that we want tougher penalties for child predators, which is the short title of the bill. This implies that the Prime Minister wants to see action on the file.

Yet when it comes to fighting cyberexploitation, we have seen chronic underspending by the government to allow law enforcement officers to ensure that there is some justice brought to those individuals being exploited and to assist victims of this exploitation.

What I am referring to is the \$2 million underspent by the RCMP, which is supposed to deal with this issue. Can the member explain why the government encourages underspending in areas of this nature, when we know full well that this is an important issue for Canadians?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the question of protecting the Canadian public, every nickel finds a spot, whether it finds its way into the budget of the RCMP or finds its way into a \$10-million grant to child protection agencies and centres, such as cybertip.ca or NeedHelpNow.ca.

Fighting child offences is not just a matter of handcuffs and pistols. It is a matter of a total panoply of programs to help combat them, whether it be against cyberbullying, whether it be tips to prevent cyberbullying, or whether it be boots on the ground. Our government is committed to giving all the resources necessary to protect our most vulnerable children. It is not necessarily with the RCMP, with pistols and handcuffs, that this is accomplished. It is a full scope. It is all the elements that are needed to protect the Canadian public.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more and more people are coming forward with reports of abuse they have suffered at the hands of their abusers. This is bad news, generally, however, there is reason for hope: society no longer tolerates this kind of behaviour. Together, we are trying to address the problem head-on and solve it as much as possible. There is some bad news, however: the RCMP's budget has been cut by \$10 million. That money should have been used to tackle this problem.

We support the bill in question, but as legislators, how can we consider increasing penalties if, while society is trying hard to eradicate the problem, police forces have fewer resources to tackle it? It does not make any sense.

How can my colleague across the aisle justify such a thing?

Mr. Robert Goguen: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, fighting this kind of offence requires a multi-faceted approach. The RCMP is not alone in fighting this. I would remind the House that we have brought in legislation that involves Internet service providers. In fact, when ISPs identify a problem of cyberbullying, they are obligated to report the source of abuse to the RCMP. We are certainly putting more resources into tackling this problem, but police forces are not the only ones working on it; members of the community and companies are also working on it. There is a wide range of possible solutions. The RCMP is not the only solution to this serious problem.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for sharing his time with me today.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in today's debate on Bill C-26, the tougher penalties for child predators act. Today I am going to focus the bulk of my remarks on the part of Bill C-26 that creates higher penalties for breaches of supervision orders. However, I want to devote a few moments on the other key features of this initiative.

I am a father of three children, and as such, it is important to me to highlight the end goal of Bill C-26: deterring child predators and focusing on the seriousness of child sexual offences. One way we can achieve that is through higher mandatory minimum penalties and higher maximums.

However, one of the reasons I am supporting Bill C-26 is that the amendments also clarify and codify the use of consecutive sentences in child sexual abuse cases. This would ensure not only consistency in application of the law but also justice for each life devastated by an offender's sexual abuse.

The amendments to supervision orders in this bill are yet another facet of this criminal law initiative that would strengthen the protection of children from sexual predators.

Supervision orders empower judges to impose conditions on child sexual offenders or persons who might commit child sexual offences. There are various orders a court can use to ensure the supervision of the offender in the community. These orders include probation orders, peace bonds, and prohibition orders. It is important to understand how each of these orders operates to fully grasp how they would achieve the underlying objective of Bill C-26. The underlying objective is to protect children from sexual predators.

Government Orders

First, probation orders can be imposed where offenders are sentenced to less than two years of imprisonment. They can also be stand-alone orders, and in all cases, they have a maximum duration of three years. These orders can vary substantially in scope. For instance, some conditions, such as keeping the peace, are mandatory, whereas other conditions are left to the discretion of a judge. These conditions can also include requiring the offender to be under house arrest except for predetermined absences, such as employment. These optional conditions must be reasonable, clear, and most importantly, certain. These conditions aim to protect society by preventing recidivism and facilitating the offender's successful rehabilitation and safe re-insertion into the community.

Peace bonds, on the other hand, can be used where there is a reasonable fear that a person will commit a child sexual offence. In fact, section 810.1 of the Criminal Code allows any person, under reasonable grounds, to lay information before a provincial court judge based on a fear that an individual will commit a certain sexual offence against a young person under 14 years of age. A court will order a person to enter into a peace bond if it is convinced, on a balance of probabilities, that the informant's fear is reasonably grounded. Peace bonds can encompass a variety of conditions, including prohibiting an offender from communicating on a computer with young people or attending public places where children could reasonably be expected to be present.

Lastly, prohibition orders allow courts to prohibit the offender from having contact with children where there exists an evidentiary basis for concluding that the offender poses a risk to young children. This prohibition may take different forms, such as a ban from specified places where children are present, restriction on employment involving a position of trust or authority over children, and access to the Internet.

The Criminal Code requires a judge to consider such orders in every case involving an enumerated offence, and they can last for the offender's lifetime.

Maximum penalties for breaches of probation orders, peace bonds, and prohibition orders, referred to collectively as supervision orders, would be increased under Bill C-26. This would ensure that those who violate conditions imposed by the courts to protect children would be held accountable.

Bill C-26 would raise the maximum penalty for breaches of all supervision orders from two to four years on indictment. In addition, it would increase the maximum penalty for breaching prohibition and peace bonds from six months to 18 months on summary conviction. The proposed new maximums would ensure that offenders who breached these supervision orders were liable to the same penalties, regardless of the type of order, according to whether the breach was a prosecuted indictment or a summary conviction.

• (1605)

Furthermore, fines for breaching probation would increase from \$2,000 to \$5,000. The supervisory aspect of these orders helps to rehabilitate offenders, but, more importantly, ensures the maintenance of a just, peaceful, and safe society.

According to Statistics Canada, a number of studies with a follow-up period of 15 years noted that the average rate of recidivism

among sex offenders is about 24%. However, alarmingly, the highest rate for recidivism found in this review was 35.5% for a sample of offenders who sexually offended against children. These offenders were followed for a 23-year period. The source of that information is the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics in a study called "Police-reported sexual offences against children and youth in Canada, 2012", which was released on May 28, 2014.

It is, therefore, absolutely crucial that serious breaches of these conditions be denounced and deterred. One way that Bill C-26 would protect children is by ensuring that once child sexual offenders are released into the community, a breach of their conditions will result in serious consequences commensurate with the objective that these types of orders are designed to fulfill—namely, the protection of the most vulnerable members of our communities, our children.

For instance, a key component of the sentencing reform in Bill C-26 would ensure that any evidence that an offence was committed while the offender was subject to a conditional sentence, on parole, or while on statutory release would be an aggravating factor in their sentencing. Treating such instances as aggravating factors is necessary to denounce, deter, and punish offenders who deliberately persist in reoffending even after they have been placed under varying forms of supervision.

Such amendments are also necessary to protect the community when rehabilitative and reintegration efforts are clearly not working for these offenders. Increased penalties for those who violate conditions imposed by the courts to protect children would serve two very important functions: first, they would hold offenders accountable; second, they would prevent future harm to vulnerable children. This is especially true in the context of child sexual offences, where breaches of supervision orders may indicate a risk that the offender will re-victimize children. Thus, increasing the minimum and maximum penalties for breach of supervision orders is an important tool that courts can use in appropriate circumstances. Not only would these measures dissuade offenders from committing offences, but they would also separate child sexual predators from society before they commit repeat offences.

Breaching a supervision order is not a trivial offence. For instance, persons subject to probation and prohibition orders have already been processed through the criminal justice system and released on conditions that are intimately intertwined with the alleged or previous offences committed. As such, breaching these orders is serious, because it is concrete acknowledgement of a refusal by that offender to be rehabilitated. We must send a clear message. Such breaches require a clear, proportionate, and dissuasive response.

Government Orders

It is important to remember that these supervision orders have not been imposed in a vacuum. Combined, the amendments in Bill C-26 would send a clear message. We will not allow offenders to commit crimes with impunity while being under community supervision, especially when such breaches put children at risk. Additionally, they would achieve consistency in punishment for all heinous sexual offences against children.

These features of Bill C-26 are important and necessary. As a result, I urge all hon. members of the House to support this bill and its swift passage.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I have a quick question for him.

The government wants to amend the Canada Evidence Act to ensure that the spouses of the accused would be competent and compellable witnesses for the prosecution in child pornography cases. Why?

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, it is a very good question. Right now, under the Canada Evidence Act, common-law partners or spouses are not asked or not allowed to testify against their spouse, but in this case, we are adding child pornography to the list of exemptions. The main reason for that, especially because of the emergence of online child pornography, is that it is really difficult to come to a conviction beyond reasonable doubt without the support of the spouse. There is a legitimate question there in terms of who is responsible for pornographic images on a home computer without having a spouse there to testify against the person who is charged.

We want them to have that ability so that when computers within the household are shared pieces technology, the spouse would be able to testify against the person who is charged.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I want to emphasize that over the last number of years we have seen significant growth in child exploitation through cyberspace or the Internet. The Government of Canada, in working with other levels of government and different stakeholders, does have a strong leadership role to play on this issue. When I say that, it means more than just legislation; it also means budgetary measures.

I would ask the member if he would not agree that while legislation is one thing, it is equally important to make sure that we have the right resources in the right places. The government's decision not to allow the RCMP to spend its full budgets in this area, some \$2 million annually, will do very little in fighting the cybersex exploitation and child exploitation that is taking place. If the RCMP is not spending that \$2 million, then it is not doing what is necessary to track down some of these issues in a very real, tangible way, thereby sparing victims and ensuring that there is more justice given to those who are perpetrating this terrible crime.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for Winnipeg North for that question. I am really glad that he asked it. However, I think the way in which he spun the question was interesting.

The member said that the government did not allow the RCMP to spend its allotted budget, which is absolutely not true. There was \$10 million sent back over the five years, but there are reasons for that, and I would like to talk about that briefly.

I had the opportunity to work with Sheldon Kennedy at the Child Advocacy Centre in Calgary. He built that program. I was able to tour the facility when it was opened and meet with many of the RCMP officers who are working as part of the team at the CAC in Calgary.

They spoke about some of the issues they are facing and how traumatic and extremely difficult this line of work is. It is something they are passionate about, certainly, but it is also something that I think any law enforcement officer would have a great deal of difficulty doing for more than a couple of years. One of the issues they talked about was the high rate of turnover as part of that job.

I was able to speak to many of those RCMP officers about the traumatic pictures they were seeing and having to sit down with these children who were brought to the CAC to discuss the issues they had gone through. The stories were horrific. Because of that, we are seeing a high turnover among the RCMP in this industry.

Therefore, a great deal of those RCMP dollars went unspent. It was not because we did not allow the RCMP to spend that money, but because of human resources issues. The RCMP just could not fill those child advocacy roles and carry out the cyberjustice activities we were looking to do.

However, we have looked at other ways. We have given \$10 million to child advocacy centres across the country. We found other ways to use those dollars. I think it is important to clarify the difference.

• (1615)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

It is a honour to speak to Bill C-26, which amends a number of acts that deal with sexual offences against children. I would like to speak as a father, as an uncle, and hopefully someday as a grandfather.

I have two children. Any time the subject of child exploitation comes up, I think all parents across Canada would have zero tolerance for any sort of child exploitation that occurs in our society.

The bill is a good step in the right direction; however, a number of amendments and a number of recommendations from expert witnesses and stakeholders introduced at committee provided very good evidence to amend the bill. As usual, the Conservatives failed to entertain any of them.

Government Orders

That said, when I and all my colleagues talk about our children, there is no doubt that whether one is on this side of the aisle or the other side, every single member of the House is dead set against child exploitation. Not only that, in the last number of years the House has brought in a number of initiatives that have tightened the laws regarding child sexual exploitation, and we were happy to support those initiatives.

Members will remember Bill C-10, an omnibus crime bill introduced by the Conservatives. We actually wanted to fast-track the sections that dealt with child exploitation. One side of the story is to bring in legislation to ensure that our children are safe, and as parliamentarians we should be doing that. I am very proud of the record of the NDP, the official opposition, in supporting initiatives that enhance the safety of our children.

It is one thing to be tough on crime, but we cannot be soft on community safety. That is the record of the Conservative government. The Conservatives have been soft on community safety. If we really want protection, laws alone will not provide it. We need to provide additional resources. Money must be invested into communities to ensure that service providers, other stakeholders, and law enforcement agencies have the tools and resources to ensure that our children are safe from predators. Earlier the member talked about the money that was unspent, and I will talk about that in a second.

I want to quote Steve Sullivan at the committee. He is the former federal ombudsman for victims of crime and he would certainly know something about resources in the community. He wrote:

...the federal government recently announced it was cutting the measly \$650,000 in funding Corrections Canada provides. [The Circle of Support and Accountability program] also receives funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre; that's also set to end this fall. In total, the program costs \$2.2 million a year.

He went on:

Like most community-based victim services, [Circles of Support and Accountability] is a fairly cheap program. It has 700 volunteers across the country; they meet with offenders after their release, help them find jobs and places to live, meet with them regularly for coffee. They support offenders as they settle into normal lives, ones that don't involve new victims. They hold them accountable.

● (1620)

This program has shown success. Here are some of the statistics that have come out. Circles of support and accountability numbers are impressive. One study found a 70% reduction in sexual offences recidivism for those who participated in circles of support and accountability compared to those who did not. Another study found an 83% reduction in child sexual offences recidivism.

This is the record of the government. If we are really concerned about ensuring safety for our children and safety in our community, why is the government cutting the very programs that have shown success in communities? They provided 700 volunteers. These are Canadian parents that are willing to volunteer their services to ensure that our communities remain safe, yet the government pulled the rug out from underneath this very successful program. We can create all the laws we want. We can say we are tough on crime, but it does not work if we are soft on community safety. That is the record of the government.

We had a couple of cases in Surrey, British Columbia. There was a young lady murdered by a sex offender who was known to the RCMP and who was on the list of those likely to reoffend. My heart goes out to the family. My heart goes out to the parents. What we did as a society, as a government, was let this happen in our community. Where was the support? How are we monitoring these people when they are released into the community?

If we know these people are likely to reoffend, why are they being dropped into the community without some sort of support, whether we provide resources to the RCMP or to the very front line workers who provide these services to monitor these individuals? We had programs in place where the recidivism rates for sexual offences were reduced by 83%, yet the government is cutting these very programs.

In fact, the mayor of the city of Surrey has called for more resources to ensure that once offenders are released, if they are released, that we have proper resources to ensure monitoring and ensuring there is support in place to ensure the safety of our children.

I often talk about this. Facts and research are not something Conservatives believe in because we know where they get their facts from. We have seen them pick their facts from Kijiji rather than relying on science or what works in the community. What works in the community are programs like circles of accountability and support.

I want to talk about the changes. I do not understand this as a parent. I do not understand as a member of Parliament. The government wants to enact a high-risk child sex offender database to establish a publicly accessible database that contains information that a police service or other public authority has previously made accessible to the public with respect to persons who are found guilty of sexual offences against children and who pose a high risk of committing crimes of a sexual nature.

If the offenders pose a high-risk of repeating crimes of a sexual nature, why are they being released into the community in the first place? That is how idiotic the government is.

If we are really concerned about ensuring the safety of our children, we need to provide resources. Bill C-26 does not provide any resources to ensure the safety of our communities.

● (1625)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide a comment with respect to the whole issue of prevention, in particular, the circumstances that children who are living in our communities will often find themselves in. Quite often, we find dysfunctional families and within those families, we will see that a child is far more vulnerable to being exploited.

I believe that the Government of Canada, working with the provincial governments and other entities, can help develop and encourage programs that would give some of these high-risk children, who are living in communities, a better chance at being able to avoid being exploited.

Government Orders

We do not talk enough inside the House of Commons about the fact that there is so much more we could be doing by working with others and developing the programs necessary in order to provide a helping hand to children who are more susceptible to being exploited.

I wonder if the member might want to provide some comment on that aspect. It is not good to only bring in legislation dealing with one end, we also have to be responsible in dealing with the other end.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, certainly, we can do more. We had \$10 million earmarked for the RCMP to deal with child exploitation which went unspent. The current government clawed it back to put it into general revenue. If we are really concerned about ensuring safety in our communities and the safety of our children, the least we can do is provide those funds to the various front line service providers that need these resources.

I have spoken with a number of RCMP officers and front line workers who deal with families and children. I can assure the House that there is lack of funding and commitment from the government to ensure that the safety of our children is put first and foremost.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was not going to stand up because I will give a speech a little later, but I could not stay silent. My son is an RCMP officer. My son was in the ICE unit. The people who go into those units are special people because they have a lot to face. They have to look at videos of children being raped, hearing their screams and know that they have to find those children. There are not many officers who want to go into the ICE unit or those kinds of units because they have not been specially trained.

Therefore, the \$10 million was not spent by the RCMP because they could not find the specialized people to deal with this unit. We can say many things in this House, but they have to be truthful and they have to reflect the realities of the day.

• (1630)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, the public safety minister is in charge of the RCMP. If \$10 million is not being spent, does the public safety minister not know that this is happening in his department, especially when this is concerning the safety of our children? Is the public safety minister asleep at the switch when it comes to the safety of our children?

I am glad the member brought that question up. If we are going to protect children and ensure safer communities, we need to ensure that the government and the public safety minister pay more attention to ensuring that we take steps to properly train those people in a timely fashion and provide resources to the community.

Perhaps the member across the aisle would like to ask the public safety minister where he has been and why he has not been paying attention to the \$10 million that had not been spent and was clawed back into general revenue?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before we resume debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Public Safety; the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—

Grand Falls—Windsor, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CBC/Radio Canada.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this debate on tougher penalties for sex offenders. In my professional career, I never stopped advocating for women's rights or for the fight against childhood poverty.

There is nothing sadder than to see children in vulnerable situations, whether because of an unstable family life, family violence, or just because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

We all have a duty in the House to ensure that we are doing everything we can to keep our families, children and communities safe and sound. Over the past few years, a significant number of children, girls and boys, have been victims of sex crimes in far too many of Canada's communities. This has an adverse effect on many aspects of their lives, on their self-confidence, their ability to trust others, their mental health and so many other things. So many families are wounded, broken and devastated because of these reprehensible crimes.

Furthermore, this bill is part of a complex societal debate because it involves several levels of government—municipal, provincial and territorial; police services such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and provincial and municipal police forces; many advocacy groups; and various professions such as youth protection workers, psychologists, street workers and psychosocial workers.

I am bringing my perspective as a mother, and also as the former president of the Regroupement des groupes de femmes de la région de la Capitale-Nationale to this debate. This bill does not do enough for the women and children traumatized by the horrors perpetrated by sex offenders.

The Conservatives consider themselves to be tough on crime. However, they are mistaken if they believe that the legislative measures proposed in this bill are sufficient. This is not the first nor the last time that I will admonish this government for its wishful thinking. I rise today with the expectation that this government will realize the importance of prevention, understand that simply handing out harsher sentences does not yield the desired results and grasp that we need meaningful action and not just fine words to look good for the cameras. Our children are paying the price for the lack of leadership to search for concrete solutions.

Government Orders

I want to talk about a statistic that shocked me and that could shock many people listening to me today. Sexual offences against children have increased 6% over the past two years. This statistic was shared by none other than the Minister of Justice, when he appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. A 6% increase is cause for concern.

Over the last decade, Canada has seen a significant increase in the number of people charged in cases of sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation and luring a child using a computer.

I will use my time today to talk about three important points. First, I will give a critique of the proposal for harsher prison sentences, which do not do enough to fix the problem. Second, I will talk about the cuts made to public protection services. Third, I will talk about how what the public really needs is meaningful, comprehensive action.

First, I would like to emphasize the fact that the NDP has always had a zero tolerance policy when it comes to sexual offences against children. I think it is important to repeat that. We have zero tolerance for sexual offences against children.

When preparing this speech on Bill C-26, I wondered why the Conservatives, who claim to be the champions in the fight against crime, have only one solution for every crime: tougher sentences. Tougher sentences alone do not work. A more comprehensive approach is needed.

Once again, the fact that sexual offences against children have increased by 6% in the past two years shows that the Conservatives are taking a minimalist approach. That is disgraceful. I would not want to be in the shoes of the Minister of Justice, who has to justify that statistic to Canadians, particularly victims and their loved ones.

One of the amendments proposed by the NDP sought to obligate the minister to submit an annual report to Parliament on the effectiveness of the law. That amendment was rejected. Once again, how can the government justify that to victims and their loved ones?

●(1635)

As I have said repeatedly, what I have seen since entering federal politics is a government that is too often reacting instead of being proactive.

They do not seem to think it is important to invest in preventing crime. I do, however, and so do the people of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and many Canadians.

The government absolutely must invest in crime prevention and other practical solutions to keep our communities safe. I have to say that we are disappointed that this bill does not do more to introduce effective solutions that will do a better job of protecting our children and making our communities safer.

That brings me to my second point, which is about budget cuts and funding shortfalls. If we want to reduce the number of sexual crimes against children in this country, we have to back that up with resources. Disappointment on that front too: there is no new funding in this bill.

Resources on the ground cannot always keep up with the Conservative government's harsher law and order policies. The NDP believes that our communities need resources to combat child sexual abuse.

In regard to funding for police services, police forces are having to do more with less. The RCMP is already having difficulty keeping the criminal records registry up to date, for lack of resources. This bill will only further increase their workload, without adding any trained personnel to protect our children.

That is why I was so surprised to learn recently that the RCMP did not spend the \$10 million earmarked for the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre and other projects to fight child pornography, even though more and more people are coming forward all the time to report child exploitation. How can this government justify that?

To illustrate my third point, I want to talk about how the Conservatives stubbornly refuse to listen to the questions being asked by people in communities across Canada and by experts. For the NDP, passing legislation is not something we take lightly. We always encourage the relevant committees to examine the bills. We meet with experts, associations and professionals with full transparency in order to understand their point of view. We often propose amendments based on the arguments of workers on the ground who are familiar with the realities facing victims.

This bill is no different; however, one thing that has not changed about the process is that the Conservatives continue to reject our amendments.

We understand the political game they are playing. However, I take exception to this government ignoring the recommendations made by the professional associations and experts who testified in committee. The experts are the ones we turn to for opinions and clarification. So why do the Conservatives ignore their recommendations?

What we want is simple. We want the government to stop turning a deaf ear and understand the scope of the problem. We want it to be open to working in collaboration with the opposition parties and the experts.

In closing, we are here to work in the interest of Canadians. This is not an easy task and we do not have all the answers.

Child sex offences have increased by 6%. We are asking the government to do more to improve those statistics and ensure that children are no longer victims of sexual offences and that communities have more resources to work on preventing and condemning reprehensible acts.

We are voting in favour of Bill C-26, but I want to add my list of concerns.

I encourage the government to get its head out of the sand and stop thinking that tougher sentences will solve the problems, because they will not.

Government Orders

I urge the government to give victims support organizations and the police the resources they need to properly discharge their mandate in view of the growing number of complaints, including those about online practices.

I am asking the government to listen to the experts in order to improve this bill.

What measures will truly help protect the most vulnerable, such as children? How and when will these measures be incorporated in the government's policies?

• (1640)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I compliment the member on many aspects of her speech, a couple of which stand out for me. It reinforces, using her term, the “lack of family guidance”. There are many situations where children lack that guidance, which leads them into a very vulnerable position. Many of them will ultimately be exploited in some fashion.

As she pointed out, and I indicated earlier, we have this growing exploitation of children through the Internet. She made reference to the 6% factor in the last couple of years. We are talking about hundreds of children every year who are exploited.

Does the member want to add some further comment with regard to the important role the government has to play in working with others to deal with some of the causes that bring into being the lack of family guidance, or dysfunctional families or whatever one might want to call it?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right and I must agree with his comments.

The government should really provide better funding as well as more powers and options to organizations that work with child victims and also to prevent others from being victimized. This also means working with repeat offenders and sex offenders. The government should also give police more opportunities to intervene and work in collaboration with municipalities, provincial police services and the RCMP in order to make our system more effective. With the advent of the Internet, it is all too easy to participate in the sex trade.

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague raised several important issues including, unfortunately, the increase in the number of reported incidents of pedophilia and people arrested for that offence. It is horrible.

I heard the stories of very competent people who have an extremely thankless job. I am the father of three children and I find individuals with pedophilic tendencies or those who act on these tendencies to be repugnant. I am a parent like everyone else.

I heard interviews with people who work in two organizations. One of them tries to support people with this problem before they act on it, while the other works with potential repeat offenders. I listened to these interviews on the radio, and the two representatives of these two organizations pointed out that they have a great deal of difficulty obtaining funding for their work.

I want to explain. I find the people who are served by these organizations to be repugnant. However, I want them to get help because, as a parent, I do not want them to abuse a child. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this problem of failing to do what is necessary to ensure there will be no new victims.

• (1645)

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, there are unfortunately far too many sexual deviants in our society, and the problem seems to have increased with access to the Internet. We need youth protection groups, psychologists, outreach workers and psychosocial workers.

We must intervene before, during and after. We have the names of people who are registered or on lists. It is always possible to create support groups to prevent individuals from reoffending or to simply encourage them not to reoffend. They will talk to them or intervene. However, this requires a lot of workers and funding, and this must obviously be done in co-operation with the provinces and with police forces. It is very important that we take action now for the sake of the children who have not yet been victimized by sexual predators.

[*English*]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to provide some input in this very important bill. It is of paramount importance that it pass through Parliament as quickly as possible.

Our government has had a very strong desire to protect children. When it comes to criminal activity such as sexual exploitation against our most vulnerable, our children, we know we must never back down in our efforts to stop these terrible crimes. When one child is hurt or exploited, it is one child too many. As a parliamentarian and a mother of six children, I am convinced that we need to do more to protect our children against sexual exploitation and believe strongly that the legislation before the House today would do just that.

I feel strongly that Canadians all across the country will pay attention to the speeches today, to the responses and to the positions of everybody on this issue. I am sure every member in the House, whether a parent, uncle, aunt, grandparent or friend, would agree that we must ensure that individuals who sexually exploit children are held fully accountable. I hope every member agrees that we must ensure the laws allow our justice system to hand out appropriate sentences that match the seriousness of the crime.

With Bill C-26, the tougher penalties for child predators act, we have an opportunity today to take an important step to protect our children from this crime that occurs far too often. As the statistics show and as was mentioned earlier, there is a 6% increase in sex offences against children. I urge all members of the House to support the passage of this bill without delay. Our children are too important, and it affects every family in Canada in one way or another.

Child sexual abuse is a crime of the most heinous nature. It causes unimaginable devastation to the lives of children. Studies have shown that it profoundly affects victims into adulthood and throughout their lives, and I dare say it affects their families as well.

Government Orders

Children under the age of 18 accounted for more than half the victims of sexual offences reported to police in 2012, and these numbers are unacceptable. They call for the kind of tough and decisive measures our government has proposed in this legislation. The bill contains a number of important elements, some of which fall under the responsibility of the Minister of Justice, including, as the name suggests, tougher penalties for those convicted of child sexual offences, and that is exactly what they should get: tougher penalties.

Legislation would require judges to impose consecutive sentences when convicted child sex offenders were sentenced at the same time for contact child sexual offences against multiple victims or for child porn and contact child sexual offences. With this legislation, both the maximum and minimum penalties for child offences would be increased, as would the maximum penalties for violating conditions of supervision orders. This is well put when 6% more offences are occurring in our great country.

The bill also includes many practical measures at better safeguarding children against sexual exploitation, both in Canada and abroad. Our government often speaks about the need to ensure that law enforcement has the tools it needs to do its job of helping to keep citizens safe. That is certainly a key preoccupation of mine and I am proud of our government's record. It is a record upon which we can further build this legislation.

For the purposes of our discussion today, the tool in question is the National Sex Offender Registry, administered by the RCMP and used by police officers all across the country. It goes without saying that law enforcement agencies need to be aware of the location of registered sex offenders, and that is where the registry comes in. As of January 2015, there were approximately 37,000 registered sex offenders on the registry. Of those, approximately 25,000 have a conviction for a child sex offence.

• (1650)

Clearly, the National Sex Offender Registry is a vital tool for police in that it provides officers with rapid access to information on registered sex offenders who are living or working in a given area and can help police in their work to prevent or investigate sexual crimes.

Members in this House know that our government has made some legislative improvements already to enhance the effectiveness of the registry. In 2011, we ensured that convicted sex offenders were automatically included in the registry and were required to give a mandatory DNA sample to the National DNA Data Bank.

However, we could do more to strengthen its effectiveness as a tool to assist police in carrying out their work. To do that, we need to make some important amendments to the legislation that governs the registry, namely the Sex Offender Information Registration Act. As members know, that act came into force in 2004 and authorized the establishment of the data base containing information on convicted sex offenders across Canada. It includes information such as the offender's name, address, place of employment, and physical description.

Let me describe how the proposed amendments in the legislation before us would improve the effectiveness of the registry, beginning

with the enhanced reporting requirements that would be imposed on sex offenders.

Obviously, reporting requirements are very important to ensure that police have up-to-date information on the whereabouts of registered sex offenders, including when they travel outside of Canada. As it stands today, registered sex offenders are required to report in person to registry officials on an annual basis and within seven days if they change either their addresses or legal names. They must also notify registry officials within seven days of a change in employment or volunteer activity, including the type of work they do.

All registered sex offenders are required to report the dates of absences of seven days or more for travel either within or outside of Canada. These are critical reporting requirements from the perspective of both accountability and public safety. However, they do not go far enough. At present, these offenders are only required to provide specific destinations and addresses for travel within Canada. Here is where it is obvious that there is a need for increased accountability and reporting.

Canada is one of many countries on the international stage that is gravely concerned about child sex tourism. Our determination to protect children from sexual crime does not stop at our borders. It extends to children everywhere. That is why, with this bill, we are taking measures to increase the reporting requirements for sex offenders who travel abroad and are imposing even more stringent requirements on those who have committed these crimes against children.

Registered sex offenders with a child sex offence would be required to report, in advance, international travel of any duration. This would now include a requirement to provide the address or locations where they will be staying and the specific dates of their travel.

As for other registered sex offenders, that is, those who do not fall into the category of child sex offender, their reporting requirements would be as follows.

They would have to report any trips of seven days or longer, again including the dates and addresses or locations where they would be staying. They would also be required to report their passport and driver's licence numbers. Of note, the new reporting obligations would apply to those currently in the registry and those convicted after the legislation comes into force. Taken together, these changes would have the effect of ensuring that police have better information regarding the whereabouts of travelling sex offenders.

Another critical part is information sharing. The next element in the bill I will highlight is how we would provide for the exchange of information on certain registered sex offenders between the officials responsible for the registry and those at the Canada Border Services Agency, CBSA.

Government Orders

As members have heard, under the current legislative framework, there is no specific legal mechanism for this information to be shared at the present time. While the current legislation allows registry information to be shared in certain circumstances, including to police services, there is no such authority for sharing with CBSA. This gap in information sharing obviously inhibits our knowledge about the travel of sex offenders. It is a gap that needs to be addressed.

Given its responsibility for management of our borders, CBSA can and should be one of the authorities involved in receiving and providing information that assists in monitoring the travel of sex offenders.

• (1655)

With this bill we would close the information gap by providing the authority for officials at the registry to regularly disclose information to the CBSA about child sex offenders who are assessed as a high risk to reoffend. The bill would also allow sharing of information between the RCMP and CBSA on other registered sex offenders on a case-by-case basis.

I would note here that the RCMP would implement a risk assessment process to determine those child offenders who present the highest risk to reoffend. The experts in the police forces are the people to do this.

Upon receiving a list of these offenders, the CBSA would then ensure that the sex offenders' names were placed on their lookout system. Border officials would also be authorized to collect travel information from these offenders upon their return to Canada and to share it with National Sex Offender Registry officials, including the date of departure and return to Canada and every address or location at which they stayed outside of Canada.

This type of enhanced information sharing would achieve two very important outcomes. The first is that we would better enable authorities to investigate and prevent crimes of a sexual nature. The second is that we would put the authorities in a better position to address any potential breaches in the reporting obligations of the offenders.

These are reasonable changes that just make sense. If we are going to keep a closer eye on the travel habits of sex offenders, it only stands to reason that our border officials and National Sex Offender Registry officials need to be able to share the information.

The final element of the bill is one that would allow us to further deliver on our commitment to Canadians to protect our communities from sex offenders. This is very important to our government, because Canadians want and deserve access to information they feel could protect their families. They feel that they need to have this information, and that includes information about potentially high-risk individuals who live in their communities. That information should be easily accessible and available to all Canadians, and this bill would pave the way for that.

The proposed public database, the high risk child sex offender database, would be separate from the National Sex Offender Registry, which is accessible only to police. This new high risk child sex offender database would be searchable by the entire Canadian public. It would include information about those high-risk child sex offenders who have already been the subject of a public

notification in a provincial or territorial jurisdiction. They would be well known anyway to the public.

Our government believes that it is only right that Canadians have the ability to access this type of information with a few simple clicks on the computer. After all, knowledge of the presence of high-risk child sex offenders in the city would empower parents to take appropriate precautions to protect their children.

To that end, I can assure members of this House that consultations are under way with the provinces and territories regarding police notifications and the proposed database. We continue to work closely with these partners to develop further criteria to define the high-risk child sex offenders who would be included in the new publicly accessible database.

As members can see, our government has developed a clear path forward to better protect the public from offenders with one of the most troubling forms of criminal behaviour we have to face in society. I am speaking as one who has worked with many trafficked victims and many children who have been sexually violated.

There is an impact on a family, and it is not just poor people, aboriginal people, or girls who are out looking for a boyfriend, or whatever people say. What we are talking about is a predatory kind of crime that looks to prepubescent children for the perpetrator's sexual gratification.

This bill would do much to close the gaps out there now. When we see a 6% increase in child exploitation and child sex offences, clearly, in Canada, there is a problem. That is why our government has taken bold steps to protect children. It has taken bold steps to ensure that we do every possible thing to enhance information sharing and communication between police forces and to protect our children from sexual exploitation and sexual crimes.

• (1700)

We would improve the accountability of sex offenders and better protect those who need safeguarding from crimes of a sexual nature. Those are our children.

I have to say that I am very proud to be part of a government that has taken a very clear stand on this. Today it is particularly interesting to hear some of the comments, because we as parliamentarians have to take a very responsible attitude and make sure that the children throughout our country are protected from sexual predators. It is frivolous to vote against or block anything that would do that. Certainly this particular bill would close many gaps. Even now, a lot of children are at risk without these gaps being closed.

I hope parliamentarians on all sides of the House will put aside their partisan concerns. I know that an election is coming soon, but by the same token, Canadians all across the country want these laws. They want their children protected. They want to know where the individuals who have been convicted of sexual offences against children reside.

We cannot heal sexual offences against children. They learn how to be survivors, but the occurrence comes back to them over and over again. The first thing I believe parliamentarians have to do in one voice is protect the most vulnerable in this country.

Government Orders

This is too important for political interference. We need to take the heart of the nation and the heart of the parents and children who are reaching out to the House of Commons today and put these laws into place and ensure that their families are safe.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I remind the government that the NDP is supporting this bill at third reading.

We know that the RCMP already has a hard time keeping criminal records up to date because they do not have adequate resources. How does the Conservative government think the RCMP can do all of this extra work effectively without additional resources?

[*English*]

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, in this economy, we can always say that we need more money and more police officers. We also need more education. What has happened throughout this Parliament is that our government has educated all of Canada. It takes a nation to stop this kind of thing.

As for the \$10 million that keeps coming up, it was not spent by the RCMP. If anyone has ever seen RCMP officers from units like that, it takes a lot to go into a unit like that. It takes training. It takes heart. It is a sacrifice for the family. That money was not spent, but right now in this country, for the first time, we have laws on human trafficking. For the first time, we have put laws in that people are learning about, and more training is coming to the forefront.

I can see that as we move on in this manner, we will have less of this problem, and the resources will be utilized very prudently.

• (1705)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the most tragic elements of child sexual abuse is the fact that people who are abused are often the people who end up becoming perpetrators. It is a horrible dynamic we have to deal with.

There are three things we absolutely know about high-risk sex offenders when it comes to children. First, most of those who victimize have been victimized themselves. Second, the most serious offenders are almost automatically listed as dangerous offenders nowadays, but they also have a history of escalating charges. In other words, they get caught committing relatively minor offences and it escalates, as there is not progressive punishment.

Finally, preventing repeat offenders is the most effective way of protecting children. Fundamentally, the most important step a government can take is to stop repeat offenders from repeating.

With all of this in mind, why did the government cut the most important, successful, and effective program that stopped offenders from reoffending? If we know that as a matter of science, why on God's earth would we stop the most effective program from being present in our communities and protecting our children? How does the government square that directive?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I have to ask how the members across the way square the fact that they voted against increased penalties for sexual offences against children when Bill C-10 was here in this Parliament.

Our government has been, as the first in many governments, focused on the victims, focused on the families first. There is a limited amount of resources. We have other programs that do address these other issues as well. However, when we talk about what is important, how in the world can anybody vote against protecting children?

It is a deterrent when people have increased penalties. It is a deterrent when the communities are looking at how they can keep their communities safe. We have people in schools and churches all across this nation who are gathering and talking about how they can have neighbourhood watch and how they can ensure that they know more about where sexual predators are.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, members across the way laugh about this, and I think that is kind of a sad commentary because the protection of our children is of paramount importance.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague comment on those of us who have been involved with policing in our own communities, and the difficulty actually of finding individuals within the policing community who really want to go down this road? As has been mentioned across the aisle many times, they accuse the minister of not spending the \$10 million. Frankly, having been on the governance side of policing in my community, the challenges that police face in this category of crime are enormous.

I know the member has a personal relationship with that, and she mentioned it during her speech. I wonder if she could comment further on that. This is unbelievable policing when it comes down to where the rubber meets the road on this issue.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, it would take a former police officer to ask a question like that. I thank my colleague.

Having said that, the member talks about the difficulties of policing and being in ICE units. How do police officers sit for hours watching a TV that shows the rapes, and hearing the children's cries? They know that they have to go and find out where those children are, because many of the predators film what they do. How do they go into an establishment and pick up a child when they have finally found her, and take her out after she has been sexually abused for a very long time? When they take the hand of that child, that hand is the same as the hand of their children. I know when I rescued a 14-year-old, her hand reminded me of my youngest daughter's hand when I took it.

Those police officers connect personally with what happens. I know, years afterward, they still hear the cries, the dreams still come. I know my own son talked about it, that when he went to sleep he could hear the cries of the children and he could not get the door down, and that was a recurring dream. That happens to a lot of ICE officers. The policing of this kind of thing is very challenging.

Government Orders

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I am not mistaken, the son of our colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul worked on child pornography investigations. First, if that is the case, I commend his son. It must be a very hard job to have to search through the evidence in these sorts of cases. It really must be very difficult. I applaud his son for the work that he does.

However, I disagree with one of my colleague's comments. I did not understand it. The Conservatives themselves admitted that \$10 million was not used. That money should have been used by the police units tasked to investigate pedophilia cases. Our colleague was saying that the money was not spent because—and surely his argument is valid—it is very difficult to find police officers who are willing to participate in these investigations and that those officers then have to be given a lot of training. I understand all that. It must be a long and difficult process. However, what I do not understand and what I would like my colleague to explain is why, rather than sending those millions of dollars elsewhere, was the money not kept and heavily invested in recruiting and training these people, if it is so difficult to get the job done?

[*English*]

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good comment. This government put forth a national action plan against human trafficking for exactly that, for training for police officers. The laws in Canada are very new on human trafficking and some of them are newer on child exploitation and sexual offences. When the member mentions the money that goes into that, our government put lots of money in to try to meet the needs that are out there because the need is greater than what has been addressed today. We need trained police officers.

I also want to point out that public safety did put in \$2.5 million to combat child sexual exploitation. Those dollars were used for programming, for awareness and for all those kinds of things as well. It is not only that \$10 million, but there are other dollars that have gone in to help on the other side of it too.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I am splitting my time with the member for Laval—Les Îles.

The stats are troubling. One out of three girls and one out of six boys will be sexually abused before the age of 18. These statistics mean that right now in Canada there are five million girls who have been sexually abused and 2.8 million boys. That number is too high. That is a statistic that should trouble everyone in Canada.

That is part of the reason why we are supporting Bill C-26 going forward, but we do not believe that the bill goes far enough and I will explain why. Some 95% of child sexual abuse victims know their perpetrator in some way, a statistic from the Badgley commission in the eighties, and 68% are abused by a family member, someone within their family: stepfather, father or an uncle. When we think of these statistics, the problem becomes much more complex.

I am the father of a 10-year-old girl. I have another daughter on the way. She is due to be born in June. These statistics are troubling

to me as a father. It is something that is always on my mind. It is always a worry that one day something might happen to my daughter.

New Democrats have zero tolerance for child sexual abuse. I would like to think that zero tolerance for child sexual abuse does not mean that we only get the predator after the perpetrator has abused the child, because that, in effect, is what the bill is addressing. For everything that is addressed in the bill, the sexual abuse has already happened. My hope as a father is that we could get rid of child sexual abuse before it happens, before any child in this country is abused.

There is nothing in Bill C-26 that will stop a child from being abused. I will explain why. The reason is that once the police put a predator in jail, the predator has abused a child. Once a perpetrator's name is in a database, the perpetrator has abused a child already. The abuse has already happened.

My question to my colleague, who may or may not be listening to me speaking about this, is that we have to find the solution to stopping sexual abuse before it happens. We have to reduce this problem that is in our country.

That said, we do support measures to remove child sexual predators from general society to protect the children they may further abuse. We even went to the point during the debates on Bill C-10 to approach the House leader and the minister responsible to say that we would take all the measures for child sexual predators out of the omnibus legislation and fast-track them through the House right away, make them into law right away. Unfortunately, the other side did not accept that. We thought that the need to pass them was pressing and that is why we proposed that. We would agree with putting these predators away so that the abuse stops.

However, we have to start talking about real action and we have to back up this action with actual funding, because tough words will not solve the problem. We also have to keep an open mind when we discuss this, because child sexual abuse is a wicked problem. It does not have simple solutions.

The statistics I cited at the top of my speech should make members think. Often when abuse happens in a family, the child is unwilling to speak because it may be a father or a stepfather. In the children's minds, they are trying to protect their family in one way, and yet they are trying to protect themselves. It is a very confusing experience for a child.

The Child Molestation Research & Prevention Institute in the U.S. says:

Professionals - physicians and therapists - can never put an end to sexual abuse; neither can the police or the courts. Why? Because they come on the scene too late. By the time they get there, the children have already been molested.

Government Orders

● (1715)

Therefore, the question we should be asking is, how do we prevent child abuse? We need to have frank discussions. The member across mentioned education, but part of the education piece that needs to happen is how to talk within families about abuse. It should not just be talking about the predator being a stranger outside of the family who is somehow going to infiltrate the family to abuse the children. Often the abuser is within the family already. Therefore, we need the tools to have these frank discussions about issues of abuse and issues of consent. As I said, 95% of the people are known to the children and 68% are often a family member.

At the core, sending molesters to jail as a solution to child molestation will always fail our children because in order for a molester to be jailed children will be abused. This is again from the institute. It is the same with treatment. When people who perpetrate child sexual abuse are identified for treatment, they have often already abused the child.

The member across the way also said that what we think of child sexual predators is not always the case. It is not one ethnic group and not one social class. There was actually a study done. It was called the Abel and Harlow child molestation prevention study. It looked at 4,000 admitted child molesters, men from the ages of 18 to 20. They found the following statistics: 77% were married; 93% were religious, men of faith; 46% had college educations; and 65% had normal steady work. After stating that, what does a child sexual predator look like? Physically, it could look like many of the men in this chamber. It is not what we imagine it to be on the outside.

They look like normal men on the outside, but on the inside they have a disorder that has been identified under the DSM as pedophilia. Pedophilia is an awful mental disorder. We do not discuss attacking this disorder enough. Often pedophilia is identified in the teenage years in men. There are signs that appear that can be signals. If we flag them soon enough, we might be able to prevent sexual abuse from occurring. If we could identify in the teenage years the signs of this disorder, then we could actually attack it right at the root.

This is where we have to attack it because then we could actually prevent these men, and sometimes women, from actually committing the sexual abuse. We have to focus on the cause. We have to develop a prevention plan to prevent sexual abuse from ever happening.

Bill C-26 does a wonderful job of looking at what to do after someone has abused a child. We would put them in jail and put them in a database. However, we really need to take action on finding a way to prevent child abuse from ever happening in the first place.

The way we are going to do that is to have a frank discussion. We have to stop portraying this as a stranger that is going to perpetrate sexual abuse on a child. We know the statistics. There have been many studies done. We have to really put the resources toward the root of the problem and start having frank discussions within our families and with our neighbours about the roots of sexual abuse.

We need to start to put our energy into this, so that those seven million children in our country, that I cited as the next generation, will have even less abuse and eventually, hopefully, we can eradicate this problem from our society entirely.

● (1720)

Mr. John Barlow (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his impassioned speech. As a father of two daughters, as well, I can certainly understand where he is coming from.

He did touch a bit on the crux of the issue. He said we do not know who these people are. They could be any one of us, and certainly, dealing with pedophilia and child sexual assault is multifaceted.

Why does the member think that serving sentences consecutively and having an increase in maximum prison sentences for sexual offences in Bill C-26 is not going to stop additional attacks on children?

Certainly, we can start at the root of the problem, but this is also going to address repeat offenders. That is also very important. Why does he not think this would address that?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech already, New Democrats are supporting the legislation. I also said that imposing jail sentences does stop the further abuse. I do not think I said anything in my speech that contradicted the fact that we need to stop further abuse.

The crux of my speech was that we have to actually stop abuse before it happens. This bill addresses elements after the abuse has happened. I would like to see legislation put before the House that would actually reduce the prevalence of abuse, get to the root of it, and stop people from abusing, rather than addressing it after the fact and being reactionary after the abuse has already happened.

● (1725)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem with a crime and punishment agenda is that it requires crime and only responds with punishment. I would be interested in the member's comments on the notion that the most prevalent cohort of child sexual offenders are people who are offended themselves. In other words, only criminalizing and only punishing attacks victims themselves.

I would like to know what the member's thoughts are on how that relates to preventive strategies as being a way of eliminating this horrible blight altogether.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, there certainly is a cycle of abuse. I knew people in my childhood who were abused and I knew that their parents were abused as well. Therefore, the parent was both abused and the abuser. It is tragic.

The thing about the crime and punishment agenda is that yes, it is necessary to protect our society from these predators, but at the same time, sometimes the crime and punishment agenda takes away from the frank discussions that we should be having about the cycle of abuse and the effect it is having on us as a society.

It takes resources away from what we could perhaps do in preventing abuse from happening in the first place and treating this as a serious matter in families.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to sincerely thank my colleague from Vaudreuil-Soulanges for his speech.

I think it is important to commend the courage it took to deliver such a speech. Everyone agrees that in our society, people who sexually abuse children are among the most ostracized, and everyone also agrees that these offences are the ones we try the hardest to combat, and rightly so. However, there was one really important point in his speech that he repeated several times. Yes, of course, we must put those people in prison and the penalties must be very stiff; we do need to send a clear message. At the same time, however, every time we send someone to prison, that means a child was abused somewhere. If there is something we can do to prevent it from happening in the first place, instead of patting ourselves on the back for sending someone to prison, then that is really important.

I wonder if the member could come back to that for the few seconds he has left.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, I can honestly say that that is what bothers me the most. These bills come into play after the abuse has already taken place. A child has already been abused. For once, could we work on preventing the abuse from happening? Could we put an end to these offences altogether?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Laval—Les Îles has only two minutes remaining.

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will start by saying that we will be voting in favour of Bill C-26. Based on the questions raised since this morning, the other side is still undecided.

As several of my colleagues mentioned this afternoon, the bill deals with the incarceration of sexual predators. We seem to be forgetting about the children. Children who have been abused are scarred for life. Clearly, incarcerating sexual predators is a good thing. However, the ideal solution would be to prevent sexual predation. As the member who spoke before me said, there is nothing in this bill to prevent sexual predators from committing the abuse. Of course they will not be able to do so once in prison, but there will be other sexual predators, because this type of abuse has always existed. We have to treat these people.

I am in a good position to talk about the damage done to abused children. My sister provides emergency foster care for youth protection services. She fosters children who must be taken away from their families on an emergency basis. Quite often the children she cares for have been taken away from their family because they were sexually abused by their own parents. These children believe that they were taken away from their families because they did something wrong.

This could all be avoided if, instead of introducing a bill to put sexual predators in jail, the government tried to prevent this type of abuse at the source.

● (1730)

WAYS AND MEANS

MILITARY CONTRIBUTION AGAINST ISIL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, March 24, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 17, under ways and means proceedings.

Call in the members.

● (1810)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 363*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Aspin	Barlow
Bateman	Benoit
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt	Calandra
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Devolin
Dreeschen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Eglinski
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hoback	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Perkins	Poillievre
Preston	Raït
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback

Private Members' Business

Shea	ShIPLEY
Shory	SMITH
Sopuck	SORENSEN
Stanton	STORSETH
Strahl	SWEET
Tilson	TOET
Trost	TROTTIER
Truppe	UPPAL
Valcourt	VAN KESTEREN
Van Loan	VELLACOTT
Wallace	WARAWA
Warkentin	WATSON
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	WILLIAMSON
Wong	WOODWORTH
Yelich	YOUNG (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	YURDIGA
Zimmer — 145	

NAYS

Members

Adams	Allen (Welland)
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	BéLANGER
Bellavance	BENNETT
Benskin	BeVINGTON
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	BORG
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brison	BROSSEAU
Byrne	CARON
Casey	CHARLTON
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	FOOTE
Freeland	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Mathysen
May	McCallum
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagog)
Mourani	Murray
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Patry	Péclét
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Sullivan
Toone	Tremblay

Trudeau	TURMEL
Valeriote	Vaughan — 122

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[Translation]***TAKEOVER OF STELCO**

The House resumed from March 11 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 537, under private members' business, standing in the name of the member for Hamilton Centre.

● (1820)

[English]

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

*(Division No. 364)***YEAS**

Members

Adams	Allen (Welland)
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	BéLANGER
Bellavance	BENNETT
Benskin	BeVINGTON
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	BORG
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brison	BROSSEAU
Byrne	CARON
Casey	CHARLTON
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	FOOTE
Freeland	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Mathysen
May	McCallum
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagog)
Mourani	Murray

Private Members' Business

Nash
 Nunez-Melo
 Patry
 Pilon
 Quach
 Rankin
 Raynault
 Saganash
 Scarpaleggia
 Sellah
 Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)
 Sitsabaiesan
 Stewart
 Toone
 Trudeau
 Valeriotte

Nicholls
 Pacetti
 Péclet
 Plamondon
 Rafferty
 Ravignat
 Rousseau
 Sandhu
 Scott
 Sgro
 St-Denis
 Sullivan
 Tremblay
 Turmel
 Vaughan— 122

Trost
 Truppe
 Valcourt
 Van Loan
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wilks
 Wong
 Yelich
 Young (Vancouver South)
 Zimmer— 145

Trottier
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Warawa
 Watson
 Williamson
 Woodworth
 Young (Oakville)
 Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

[Translation]

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM DAY ACT

The House resumed from March 23 consideration of the motion that Bill S-219, An Act respecting a national day of commemoration of the exodus of Vietnamese refugees and their acceptance in Canada after the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill S-219, under private members' business.

● (1825)

[English]

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

(Division No. 365)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
 Albas
 Alexander
 Allison
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Aspin
 Bateman
 Bezan
 Block
 Braid
 Butt
 Carrie
 Chong
 Clement
 Daniel
 Dechert
 Dreeschen
 Dykstra
 Falk
 Fast
 Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
 Galipeau
 Gill
 Goldring
 Gosal
 Grewal
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hayes
 Hoback
 James
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lebel
 Leitch
 Leung
 Lobb
 Lunney
 MacKenzie
 Mayes
 McLeod
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Nicholson
 Oliver
 Opitz
 Paradis
 Perkins
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Shory
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Tilson

Adler
 Albrecht
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambler
 Anders
 Armstrong
 Barlow
 Benoit
 Blaney
 Boughen
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Calandra
 Chisu
 Clarke
 Crockatt
 Davidson
 Devolin
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Eglinski
 Fantino
 Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
 Fletcher
 Gallant
 Goguen
 Goodyear
 Gourde
 Harper
 Hawn
 Hiebert
 Holder
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Leef
 Lemieux
 Lizon
 Lukiwski
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Maguire
 McColeman
 Menegakis
 Norlock
 O'Neill Gordon
 O'Toole
 Payne
 Poilievre
 Raitt
 Rathgeber
 Rempel
 Rickford
 Saxton
 Seeback
 Shipley
 Smith
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Toet

Ablonczy
 Adler
 Albrecht
 Allen (Welland)
 Allison
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Angus
 Ashton
 Atamanenko
 Barlow
 Bélanger
 Bennett
 Bevington
 Blanchette
 Blaney
 Boivin
 Boughen
 Boutin-Sweet
 Brison
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Byrne
 Caron
 Casey
 Chisholm
 Chong
 Christopherson
 Cleary
 Comartin
 Cotler
 Crowder

Adams
 Albas
 Alexander
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambler
 Anders
 Andrews
 Armstrong
 Aspin
 Aubin
 Bateman
 Bellavance
 Benskin
 Bezan
 Blanchette-Lamothe
 Block
 Borg
 Boulerice
 Braid
 Brosseau
 Butt
 Calandra
 Carrie
 Charlton
 Chisu
 Choquette
 Clarke
 Clement
 Côté
 Crockatt
 Cullen

Private Members' Business

Cuzner	Daniel	Stanton	St-Denis
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Stewart	Storseth
Day	Dechert	Strahl	Sullivan
Devolin	Dewar	Sweet	Tilson
Dion	Dionne Labelle	Toet	Toone
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre	Tremblay	Trost
Dreeshen	Dubé	Trottier	Trudeau
Dubourg	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Truppe	Turnel
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Uppal	Valcourt
Dykstra	Easter	Valeriote	Van Kesteren
Eglinski	Eyking	Van Loan	Vaughan
Falk	Fantino	Vellacott	Wallace
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Warawa	Warkentin
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher	Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Foote	Freeland	Sky Country)	
Freeman	Fry	Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Galipeau	Gallant	Williamson	Wong
Garneau	Garrison	Woodworth	Yelich
Genest	Genest-Jourdain	Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Giguère	Gill	Yurdiga	Zimmer— 266
Godin	Goguen		
Goldring	Goodale		
Goodyear	Gosal		
Gourde	Gravelle		
Grewal	Groguhé		
Harper	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)		NAYS
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Nil	
Hawn	Hayes		PAIRED
Hiebert	Hoback		
Holder	Hsu	Nil	
Hughes	James		
Jones	Julian		
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)		The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)		stands referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.
Kent	Kerr		(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)
Komarnicki	Krampr (Prince Edward—Hastings)		
Lake	Lamoureux		
Lapointe	Latendresse		
Lauzon	Laverdière		
Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)		
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leaf		
Leitch	Lemieux		
Leslie	Leung		
Liu	Lizon		
Lobb	Lukiwski		
Lunney	MacAulay		
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie		
Maguire	Mai		
Marston	Martin		
Mathysen	May		
Mayes	McCallum		
McColeman	McLeod		
Menegakis	Michaud		
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)		
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)		
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)		
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani		
Murray	Nash		
Nicholls	Nicholson		
Norlock	Nunez-Melo		
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon		
Opitz	O'Toole		
Pacetti	Paradis		
Patry	Payne		
Péclet	Perkins		
Pilon	Plamondon		
Poillievre	Preston		
Quach	Rafferty		
Raitt	Rajotte		
Rankin	Rathgeber		
Ravignat	Raynault		
Reid	Rempel		
Richards	Rickford		
Ritz	Rousseau		
Saganash	Sandhu		
Saxton	Scarpaleggia		
Schellenberger	Scott		
Seebach	Sellah		
Sgro	Shea		
Shipley	Shory		
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)			
Sims (Newton—North Delta)			
Sitsabaiesan	Smith		
Sopuck	Sorenson		

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties. I think if you seek it, you shall find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, in relation to the consideration of Government Motion No. 17,

(a) after three Members have spoken to the motion, no Member, except the leaders of officially recognized parties, shall speak for more than ten minutes, provided that following each such speech a period not exceeding five minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses thereto;

(b) the Speaker shall, in relation to the fourth and fifth Members to speak, give preference to Members who are not members of a recognized party, before resuming the usual debate rotation observed by the Chair; and

(c) on Thursday, March 26, 2015, the motion shall be the first item considered under Government Orders following the daily routine of business, and the House may continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, until 12 midnight or until no Member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, at which time the debate shall be deemed adjourned, provided that, after 6:30p.m., no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

● (1830)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Private Members' Business

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

NATIONAL FIDDLING DAY ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-218, An Act respecting National Fiddling Day, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no motions at report stage the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise in the House to once again speak on my proposed Bill S-218 to designate a national fiddling day.

Fiddling has a rich history in our country, and I believe that this history needs to be cherished and celebrated. Fiddling is an expression that has roots throughout our entire nation. Fiddle music connects all regions of Canada and brings a universal smile and a toe tap whenever it is heard. From the down-east style made famous by Don Messer to the Métis style spread by John Arcand to the traditional Cape Breton style played by Natalie MacMaster, fiddling is an integral part of Canadian culture that has long-standing historical roots.

Whatever the style, the common thread is spreading happiness and joy to all those who play and listen. Enacting the third Saturday in May of each year as national fiddling day would encourage all Canadians to embrace and enjoy this day and would bring a spotlight to the many Canadians who have graced the country and the world with this infectious and important music.

I am especially happy to propose this legislation at this time when the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Association has recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. The association does important work promoting and preserving fiddling music in Canada. Also this year, the Canadian Grand Masters fiddling competition is being held in my home province of New Brunswick, in the town of Sackville.

New Brunswick, like all other provinces, has deep roots in the history of fiddling music. My province hosts a unique annual festival in the town of Plaster Rock, New Brunswick. It is the annual Fiddles on the Tobique. The event coincides, of course, with fiddlehead season. The festival started with a lone fiddler years ago and today attracts people from all over the world. Quite possibly it is the only event of its kind anywhere.

This event combines two time-honoured New Brunswick traditions: fiddling and canoeing. Imagine the beautiful sight and sound of a flotilla of canoes carrying almost 200 musicians down the Tobique River while they play old-time fiddle music. Those attending are treated to concerts, jam sessions, dances, and even an instructional fiddle camp.

Our Atlantic Canada region in general has had great fiddlers. Winston "Scotty" Fitzgerald, 1914 to 1987, was a renowned Cape Breton fiddler. He was a pioneer in recorded performances of the music and has heavily influenced the style and repertoire of later generations of players.

Another award-winning Cape Breton musician, Natalie MacMaster, began her fiddling career at 16.

Don Messer was born in Tweedside, New Brunswick and began playing the violin at age five, learning fiddle tunes with Irish and Scottish influences. As a young boy, Messer would play concerts in the local area, and later he played throughout southwestern New Brunswick. During the 1920s, Messer moved to Boston, Massachusetts for three years, where he received his only formal instruction in music.

Messer left Saint John in 1939 and moved to Charlottetown, P.E.I. and worked as music director at CFCY. There he formed the Islanders, and this music group began to make regular television appearances on CBHT-TV in Halifax, Nova Scotia. CBC television began a summer series called *The Don Messer Show* on August 7, 1959, which continued into the fall as *Don Messer's Jubilee*, produced in Halifax.

Don Messer's Jubilee was a must for us every Monday night throughout the 1960s. How we loved to hear the sound of the twin fiddles of Don Messer and Earl Mitton. The show won a wide audience and reportedly became the second-most watched television show in Canada during that decade, next to *Hockey Night in Canada*.

●(1835)

Another down-home style New Brunswick fiddler was Ned Landry, who taught himself to play the fiddle at an early age. Ned Landry was winner in the open class of 1956, 1957 and 1962 Canadian Open Old Time Fiddlers' Contest.

Landry appeared in the 1950s on CFBC Radio, Saint John, and in the 1960s on *Don Messer's Jubilee* and other TV shows. Landry was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 1991. Landry was also later inducted into the North American Fiddlers' Hall of Fame and the Nova Scotia Country Music Hall of Fame.

Ivan Hicks, another famous New Brunswick fiddler, has played the fiddle for over 60 years. He and his wife Vivian have shared their talents with many students, young and old alike, and have been an inspiration to countless others.

Ivan is actively involved in promoting, attending and instructing at workshops. He continues to judge fiddling contests throughout Canada.

Private Members' Business

Many awards and honours have come to them, including the induction into the New Brunswick Country Music Hall of Fame for both Ivan and Vivian, and the North American Fiddlers' Hall of Fame for Ivan.

Then, of course, there is Miramichi's very own Matilda Murdoch. At the age of eight, her father gave her a fiddle, and later that year, through her own determination, she played her very first tune. Since then, she has become an icon in fiddle circles throughout North America.

Murdoch has been part of a cultural community of Miramichi and New Brunswick for most of her 94 years. Her style of playing has been admired and studied by not only local fiddlers but also fiddlers from throughout North America, and more recently, from Ireland. Entertainer Don Messer was one of those many admirers. He invited Matilda to play on the popular Don Messer show, and he also recorded several of her tunes to show his respect for her music.

Another admirer of Matilda was one of our very own, the late Jim Flaherty, who visited Miramichi and was able to enjoy her music in his ancestral home of Loggieville. Murdoch has garnered regional, national and international recognition for her abilities as a composer, player and teacher. She was elected into the North American Fiddlers' Hall of Fame and the New Brunswick Country Music Hall of Fame.

Matilda Murdoch has reached and surpassed the definition of success. Organizations and musicians have recognized her on a worldwide scale. Matilda was the recipient of the Order of New Brunswick as well as the Order of Canada.

Loggieville also boasts another very accomplished fiddle player, Samantha Robichaud, who represents a new generation of fiddlers. Now in her late twenties, Samantha has released seven critically acclaimed albums and has earned many awards.

Her musical venture now spans over three decades, completing 11 albums, performing thousands of shows and collaborating with a multitude of world renowned artists.

These are just a few of our very known fiddlers. In Miramichi we have our very own group of fiddlers known as the Miramichi fiddlers. These men and women give of their time, volunteering at fundraisers and many events on the river. They certainly bring much enjoyment to our area and are always much appreciated by all.

These are just a few of the fiddlers that I grew up listening to and who are known in my region. I am sure my colleagues would agree that they are just a small portion of the well-known and talented fiddlers throughout our great nation.

I believe that a designated national fiddling day will also be important with the upcoming 150th anniversary of our great nation. In 2017, Canadians will celebrate this great milestone and a national fiddling day will be one way to help them learn about and express pride in the cultural and social impact that fiddling music has had on the shaping of our country.

● (1840)

Furthermore, we not only wish to celebrate the impact this music has had on our nation but also the beauty that is in the instrument

itself, and shine a light on Antonio Stradivari, the renowned crafter of the stringed instrument. By spreading the history of the instrument, along with its historical significance, we can hopefully reach a whole new generation of fiddle players who will continue to shape the musical and cultural landscape of our country today and tomorrow.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not get the opportunity at second reading to put some words on the record in regard to the bill, so I want to put my question more in the form of a statement and reflect on the importance of the fiddle.

In particular, I know the Métis community in Manitoba, and many others, have invested a great deal of time and energy into the development of the fiddle. Quite often during festivities, and I cite Folklorama as one of those festivals, the fiddle plays a very important role. It generates a great sense of excitement in the province of Manitoba, and more and more people are taking an interest in playing the fiddle.

I will reaffirm to the member the importance of having days of this nature. They allow members of Parliament and others to promote the importance of the fiddle, because it has played a very important role in Canada's heritage. Here we can single out a day and encourage involvement and attention that will benefit our heritage.

Would the member like to provide a comment on the important symbolism and reality of the fiddle for Canada's heritage?

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his statement and reiterate all of what he said.

As I said in my statement, we need to promote this idea. We need to keep it going so that our future generations will realize and appreciate how much fiddlers mean to us and what they have given to Canada right across our great country.

● (1845)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to support the private member's bill from the hon. member for Miramichi.

I know many have made the point of how cross-cultural fiddling is. I come from Cape Breton Island myself, where we know there are strains of fiddling that came from the Cape Breton Highlands, strains of fiddling that came from the sounds of bagpipes and were transposed from bagpipes to fiddles, and fiddling that comes from the Acadian community, which shares the same strains as the Cajuns down in Louisiana, in New Orleans.

Then, of course, we have stunning fiddlers, legends like Lee Cremona, who is Mi'kmaq, who also picked up the fiddle and brought his own cultural reality to fiddling.

I am proud to support the motion. I would ask my hon. friend if she thinks there is any part of Canada where fiddling is not relevant.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her statement and for her support on the bill.

I certainly agree. I doubt there is anywhere across our great country where we would not find the fiddle as an important instrument. It certainly provides a lot of entertainment for all of us right across our great country.

Private Members' Business

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for bringing this subject up in the House of Commons to recognize the unique cultural impact that the fiddle and fiddle music have had throughout Canada, rural Canada, Cape Breton Island, and southern Ontario.

My riding is very proud to be the home of Mark Sullivan, a three-time national fiddle champion who now lives in British Columbia. We wish he would come back and share his music in Ontario more than he does, but the Sullivan family in Bowmanville is very proud of his accomplishments. He is part of a network of fiddle music and traditional Celtic music that really makes this country a better place. They work together. In Cape Breton, they have the Leahys in Lakefield. They have Mark Sullivan from Bowmanville connecting through with New Brunswick and western Canada.

My question for the member is simply this: has the community recognized her work in spreading the important message of the impact of this wonderful music to our culture?

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Mr. Speaker, yes, I have received lots of comments and thanks from the Miramichi Fiddlers themselves and from Mrs. Murdoch, who was very proud of the fact that I am bringing this bill forward, and from many relatives who have gathered over the years to play fiddle music in our own homes.

Yes, it has been very well received on the Miramichi, and I have received lots of thanks for doing it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): "Now, what would you kids like me to play for you?"

Mr. Speaker, that is what my grandfather used to say every time he started playing when I was little. He got his violin out of its old case, and in the comforting glow of the wood stove that my grandmother cooked everything on, he played the strings that unite us to this day. The old farmhouse floors creaked under the dancing feet of all 20 of us grandchildren and the 16 adults who made up our extended family. That was in the 1950s, but I remember it as if it were yesterday.

Bill S-218 would designate national fiddling day, and I have to say that I am very happy to talk about this. Of course, it is a shame that Bill S-218 came from the Senate, not the House of Commons, but I fully support the idea of designating a national fiddling day.

From Newfoundland to British Columbia to Quebec and the Prairies, fiddling has been bringing people together all over Canada for a long time. The traditional music canon bears witness to the many waves of immigration to Canada, making the fiddle the ultimate inclusive instrument.

Fiddling draws on so many sources, and we can detect the influence of Scottish and Irish communities as well as French and Ukrainian ones in the pieces we play here in Canada. The instrument has fostered cultural fusions that are now part of our shared culture. Consider the very famous Quebec folk music group, *Le rêve du diable*, whose name comes from a reel, an Irish dance, called *The Devil's Dream*.

Creating this national day represents an excellent opportunity to highlight the importance of the fiddle in our communities. It

definitely plays a very important role in my riding, Joliette. For many people, Joliette is synonymous with music. Our slogan is "Joliette, sol de musique". We have the renowned Festival de Lanaudière, which brings together the finest classical musicians from here and around the world every year to play in a superb amphitheatre with incredible acoustics.

I invite all members of the House to join us at Festival de Lanaudière, which is held in late July and early August. Of course, the musicians are sheltered on stage, but the lawn can accommodate between 7,000 and 8,000 people. Spectators can enjoy their supper while listening to the music.

Our beautiful region has been a springboard for many traditional groups, including some you may have heard of: Bottine souriante, Belzébuth, les Poules à Colin and Les charbonniers de l'enfer. They did not all start in Joliette, but many of them developed there and recorded albums or performed their first shows there.

I appreciate the merits and beauty of the classical violin every year at the festival in Lanaudière, but the fiddle allows for more spontaneity, which makes it more accessible. I am pleased that we have this opportunity to talk about the social role it has played in our communities. The fiddler is more than a musician; he or she brings people together and is a communicator, a focal point that connects everyone. When fiddlers come together they can improvise reels for hours, to the delight of the toe-tappers around them.

In families, at lumber camps, at Christmas and Hallowe'en, the fiddle has made a tremendous contribution to Canada's heritage and development. It has helped weave Canada's social and cultural fabric and I am very pleased that we are recognizing the importance of that contribution.

In the riding of Joliette, traditional music is still an important part of our culture today, as you can see at the Mémoires et Racines festival held at the end of July. What is more, the Joliette CEGEP has made a name for itself by offering a specialized program in traditional music. We also have a radio station back home that plays nothing but traditional music.

● (1850)

You must also go to Saint-Côme to appreciate the importance of our traditional music, because in that area music groups are named after families. These families have their own particular style of singing, moving and interacting. The strong presence of traditional music, and thus of fiddling, is indisputable in Joliette.

Fiddling is important and prevalent throughout the entire Lanaudière region. Not very far from my riding, you will find the Camp de Violon Traditionnel Québécois de Lanaudière, a wonderful asset for the entire region. Its president, the talented fiddler André Brunet, supports this bill. In highlighting the role of fiddling in Quebec culture, he said:

If any instrument is as authentic as our emotions in the whirl and swirl of a gathering, it is certainly the violin, an integral part of the dance that sweeps us away, that brings us together and tugs at our heartstrings.

Mr. Brunet added:

Each of us is a fiddler at heart.

Private Members' Business

The president of the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Association, Graham Sheppard, also supports this bill. He said:

Amid the turmoil that surrounds us and the difficult decisions that this House has to make, it is refreshing to stand and be part of this effort. For the thousands of fiddlers and lovers of fiddle music in Canada, a National Fiddling Day will be a cherished annual event. Also, this will give each of us the encouragement to foster the preservation and growth of fiddle music in the regions that we represent and throughout Canada.

In my opinion, these comments from people in the community show that this proposal has a lot of support and a laudable goal. I spoke about my grandfather, but I am sure that many members of the House had fiddlers in their families. That is why this bill is getting so much support. I am sure that everyone here will vote in favour of it.

There is no doubt in my mind that this is good news for Canadian heritage. I encourage everyone in the House to support this bill.

• (1855)

[English]

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to speak on Bill S-218, an act respecting National Fiddling Day, which would designate the third Saturday in May each and every year as national fiddling day. Bill S-218 would align in both content and spirit with World Fiddle Day, an annual day first commemorated in 2013, which celebrates the fiddle, the violin as some would call it, family of instruments.

National fiddling day would increase the understanding of the history of fiddling in Canada, would promote musical collaboration and offer an opportunity for community engagement and entertainment. In doing so, this national day would link rural and urban settings, multi-generations of Canadians and multicultural groups to the vast range of styles comprised in the art of fiddling.

As we all know, the fiddle is commonly played at important Canadian events. Fiddling is rooted in Canadian culture. It unites our lineage yet reflects regional diversity and culture, which is French, Inuit, Metis, first nations, Ukrainian, Scottish, Irish, Acadian and so on. They all play the fiddle through its various different styles.

Canada recognizing such a day would provide an opportunity not only to celebrate the fiddle as an instrument but also to celebrate fiddling itself: the men and women who bring this music to life; the entertainment; the coming together of family, friends, and community; and the celebration of our unique and distinctive cultures that find such a melodic expression through the fiddle. Indeed, the influence of exchanges between many cultures contributes to the evolution and diversification of fiddling music.

I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the origins of fiddling as it relates to my riding and the entire island of Cape Breton. The tradition of the fiddle lives on in Cape Breton where we are fortunate enough to have a number of world-class fiddlers such as Ashley MacIsaac, Natalie MacMaster, former premier Rodney MacDonald, Buddy MacMaster, Howie MacDonald, and of course the Rankin Family band who carried Cape Breton music to an international audience. It seems that even the most famous Cape Breton musicians are considered as friends and fellow members of the larger music community. Natalie, Ashley and the Rankin Family are all members of the Cape Breton Fiddlers' Association, which was

formed in 1973 and will celebrate its 42nd anniversary this year in Boston.

During the 19th century, thousands of Highland Scots emigrated to Cape Breton. Members just have to look in a phone book in Cape Breton and they will see the Macs are everywhere. They brought with them such a rich cultural tradition that dominates the island to this day. Traditional Celtic music remains as braided into the Maritimes' energy, beauty and personality as a tartan is to kilts. Communities and the Gaelic culture were transplanted to Cape Breton, bringing the traditional fiddle style of the highlands and the islands with them.

Cape Breton fiddle music is unique in many ways, with a complex cultural history and its profound relationship with social identity on Cape Breton Island. Cape Breton fiddle music continues to thrive and evolve because it is not simply an historical artifact or a cultural curiosity but rather a vital, evolving and regenerating musical form. Cape Breton fiddling has slowly evolved with the careful guidance of family and the local community.

Cape Breton fiddling, up until even the early 1980s, was often referred to as Scottish fiddling or Cape Breton Scottish music. The term "Cape Breton fiddling" may also have become more common as our global community has become more accessible, given that international contact and communication has increased. Perhaps with growth in air travel, technology and communications, Cape Breton musicians and music fans have grown to see differences between their music and Scottish, Irish and other music to deem it acceptable to call their traditional music by its own name. No longer is a Cape Breton musician required to be called a Scottish fiddler, or an Irish player, he or she is now referred to as a Cape Breton fiddler, which is less confusing. However, influences from other styles still exist or continue to be imported, exchanged and adapted to the general Cape Breton traditional style.

We have many workshops in Cape Breton at The Gaelic College where people come from all over the world to exchange their ideas and their form of music. This further emphasizes the unique and cultural diversity associated with the art of fiddling, as it is a craft that has been influenced by many diverse cultures.

• (1900)

In rural Cape Breton, early Scottish settlers were able to preserve their highland style through a strong need to continue both their dance music and their oral cultural forms. These old and interdependent traditions were the basis of local entertainment. Over several generations, they came to provide relief, not just from isolation and long winters but also from the heavy labours associated with a challenging environment. Whether people worked on the farms in the fields, or in the coal mines, steel plants and the fishing fleets, a fiddle was always handy.

Even though in recent times much of the original and Gaelic culture has been in steep decline, the music has continued to flourish. While a healthy evolution of the form is evident in spite of radical changes in linguistic, social and economic conditions after 1955 when we built the Cape Breton Causeway, Gaelic fiddling has survived intact.

Private Members' Business

Fiddling represents the preservation and continuity of community. Fiddling is a building block of many communities, especially in Cape Breton and my riding of Sydney—Victoria. Inverness County is home of the Cape Breton fiddling tradition. For longer than any other Scottish settlement, the people of Inverness County continue to live as they might have lived in Scotland 100 or 200 years ago.

Cape Breton classic fiddling music is also linked to the Gaelic language. Most fiddlers generally agree that the sound of a correctly performed Cape Breton fiddle tune resonates with the sound of the spoken Gaelic language. The decline of the Gaelic language in Cape Breton could therefore be perceived as a direct threat to the survival of the fiddle tradition. Despite the perceived threats to the survival of Cape Breton fiddle music, it has survived and continues to evolve. It is a key economic factor. Out migration significantly affected the Cape Breton fiddle tradition. Playing style and sound experienced an intermingling with other cultures in places like Massachusetts and Michigan, which clearly affected its evolution.

Like the Gaelic language, once the most prominent language on our island, and for years the primary language of many Canadians, the fiddle tradition was believed to have suffered with the introduction of the radio and later the television to the island culture. As a language disappears, it is up to participants to decide the validity of maintaining other things which that language has influenced, for example, fiddling, in the case of Gaelic.

The CBC film called *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler* was produced in 1972, and it was a cry for help and a plea for survival of this most important tradition of fiddling. The result was a renaissance in fiddling, beginning with the annual festival of fiddlers at Glendale in 1973. From that point on, fiddle music began to thrive again, attracting young players and wider audiences. New tactics and new sounds, but the fiddle was continuing to get back its popularity.

Preparation for the successful 1973 festival gave birth to the Cape Breton Fiddlers' Association, and its work continues today. The association's main mandate has been to preserve and promote traditional Cape Breton fiddle music. Since its inception, it has provided workshops and opportunities for its members to learn new tunes and techniques. It has published tunes written by its members and it has provided venues for musicians to perform for thousands of people. It has nurtured and supported its members to excel. As a result, many of these wonderful members are now worldwide.

Cape Breton fiddle music became part of a global Celtic revival where Celtic music in various forms achieved a high degree of international popularity. This traditional music has helped Cape Breton in providing a boost to the depressed island economy. Tourism is taking off in Cape Breton and one of the biggest tourist attractions, and I encourage all members to come, is in the break week in October. It is called Celtic Colours. It is when the leaves of all the beautiful hardwoods in Cape Breton are in full colour, while we have a big Celtic festival with a whole week of music. We have musicians brought in from all around the world, plus our local talent. Church halls and every venue is used, with music throughout the island. Thousands of visitors come to Cape Breton to enjoy the hospitality and Celtic music it provides.

● (1905)

I have so much more I would like to say about the fiddling across this great country we live in. I am supporting, and I ask my colleagues to support, Bill S-218, An Act respecting National Fiddling Day in Canada. We in Cape Breton, fiddlers and people who love to fiddle across this country, would appreciate this House moving this bill forward.

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address Bill S-218, An Act respecting National Fiddling Day.

Our country is culturally diverse. Over the centuries, newcomers have been arriving in Canada and bringing with them the traditions and customs of their cultural communities. Luckily for all Canadians, these traditions and customs often include art, music and dance.

The fiddle has been an important instrument in many of these communities. Across Canada, contributions from first nations people, in addition to Canadians of English, Scottish, Irish, French and Ukrainian heritage have given Canada an incredibly rich and diverse inventory of fiddling styles and music.

Cape Breton, Nova Scotia is considered the heart of Scottish fiddling in Canada. Since the 19th century, with the arrival of the 25,000 Gaelic-speaking Scots, Cape Bretoners have come together for house dances. These house dances are an informal gathering with music, dancing and socializing. They have carried on the Scottish fiddling traditions.

The most famous story of Nova Scotia is the one about Buddy MacMaster, who worked as a station agent for the Canadian National Railways during the 1940s. Buddy was stationed at Valley depot, near Truro, where he often worked the late shift.

In the quiet times between trains, Buddy would often practise his fiddling during the night shift. The train dispatcher in New Glasgow knew of this and would communicate with Buddy and other station agents to find out when the tracks were clear. When they were, they would ask Buddy to play a song over the dispatch and railroad agents across the Maritimes would listen in.

Buddy's passion for the fiddle ran in the family, and today, Buddy's niece, Natalie MacMaster carries on that tradition. Ms. MacMaster has won two JUNO awards, and in 2006 she was made a member of the Order of Canada, not only for her enormous talent but for using her fiddling to support charitable causes across Canada and to raise awareness of development issues in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Ms. MacMaster is a fine example of the Cape Breton style of fiddling, which was brought to Canada from the Scottish Highlands. Today, many consider the Scottish tradition to be better preserved in Cape Breton than in Scotland itself thanks, no doubt, to fiddling masters like Ms. MacMaster.

Adjournment Proceedings

Fiddling in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick is also a mixture of cultures with surviving Acadian influences, as well as those of Scotland and Ireland. New Brunswick's most famous influential fiddle player, of course, is Don Messer, who began his career on the radio in 1929 on a musical program called the *New Brunswick Lumberjacks* on CFBO in Saint John.

He became a Canadian household name in 1959 with his CBC television show *Don Messer's Jubilee*. His playing style, known as "down-east" or "Messer" style, was straightforward and easy to listen to. Mr. Messer's musical style established what is known today as the national Canadian old-time style. Don Messer's television show was reportedly the second-highest rated show in Canada, behind *Hockey Night in Canada*, and was enjoyed by all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

When the CBC made a questionable decision to cancel the show in 1969, it was inundated with protests and complaints from irate Canadians, with 1,500 angry telephone calls and over 20,000 pieces of mail. There were protests on Parliament Hill and angry questions from Conservative leader John Diefenbaker in the House of Commons. Fortunately, a Don Messer television show would be picked up in the fall by CHCH in Hamilton.

Fiddle music has a historic connection to many of our communities. It was a significant and common form of artistic expression for Canadians from all different backgrounds in different parts of the country. I encourage members to vote for this bill to honour this very Canadian tradition. We do not want to make the same mistake that the CBC made when it decided to cancel *Don Messer's Jubilee*.

Today, fiddlers, as well as festivals and community traditions, are keeping Canada's fiddling traditions alive. The fiddle has been an instrument that has enabled Canada's immigrants to continue their traditional cultures while they settled into their new homes in Canada. Fiddle music has contributed to Canada's rich history of community-building and melding of traditions into a culture which is uniquely Canadian.

I trust that my hon. colleagues will join me and agree to designate the third Saturday in May in each and every year as national fiddling day.

• (1910)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Miramichi will have her five minutes of reply.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a sincere thanks to all of the members here tonight who have given such strong support. I am assured that all of the members here in the House realize what fiddling music has done for all of Canada, and how much value there is to this. I look forward to seeing this bill passed and being able to have our special day for all fiddlers right across Canada. I know that they too would appreciate this day designated just to recognize them.

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.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight at adjournment proceedings to pursue a question that I initially asked earlier this year. I asked the question on February 17. It relates to the current debate, Bill C-51, the so-called anti-terrorism act but it is actually an omnibus bill with a much longer title, five bills rolled into one.

The Prime Minister gave me the courtesy of actually responding to my question and this is his entire response. He said:

I think it is very well known that the anti-terrorism act, 2015, is designed to deal with the promotion and actual execution of terrorist activities, and not other lawful activities.

Having heard that very sensible sentence from the Prime Minister, now let me say what the question was and why the Prime Minister's response formed no answer at all.

What I have been trying to ascertain from the Minister of Public Safety, from the Minister of Justice and, indeed, from the Prime Minister, is how this bill would affect dissent in this country if it should fall outside of the modifying word "lawful". We will find that phrase in the bill, in part 1, following a great long list, which I must emphasize. In describing activities that undermine the security of Canada, the list that is provided in that section from (a) to (i) is not an exhaustive list. It comes under a list that has the preface, "including any of the following activities".

It is not exclusively just this list of activities, but it is quite overbroad in its definition. In the list, (a), for example, is:

interference with the capability of the Government of Canada in relation to intelligence, defence, border operations, public safety, the administration of justice, diplomatic or consular relations, or the economic or financial stability of Canada;

It goes on from there to list, "interference with critical infrastructure". However, this is just a list. It could be almost anything. At the end of this list, comes this phrase, "For greater certainty, it does not include lawful advocacy, protest, dissent and artistic expression".

Adjournment Proceedings

As I said on three occasions in question period when my questions were responded to by the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Public Safety and the Prime Minister, what I have been trying to point out is this. How will that phrase protect the kind of dissent that falls outside the word “lawful”; such as an activity that does not have a permit, such as an activity that is a conscious and deliberate decision to conduct non-violent civil disobedience, knowing that the activity is not lawful, knowing that one may be arrested, but also knowing that one has no intention whatsoever to do anything that is violent or a threat to anyone except to make a statement of conscience? When Rosa Parks sat down in the whites-only section of the bus, that was illegal and under this language we are in trouble.

In 2001, when the previous government first put forward an anti-terrorism act in response to 9/11, this same debate took place. The word “lawful” appeared as a modifier in front of “protest”. It took then Minister of Justice, Anne McLellan, some considerable time to agree with the opposition that the word “lawful” would make illegal wildcat strikes the subject of security and intelligence operations.

The word “lawful” should be removed from Bill C-51; and I wonder when Conservatives will understand the question.

• (1915)

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will attempt to respond to the member's question, although I think it is fairly straightforward and understandable. It is in the notes here, but I am surprised she would not actually realize it.

The international jihadist movement has declared war on Canada. Canadians are being targeted by jihadist terrorist simply because they hate our society and the values that we hold dear.

We reject the argument that every time we talk about security, our freedoms are threatened. Canadians understand that their freedom and security go hand in hand. Canadians expect us to protect both, and there are safeguards in the legislation to do exactly that.

There is the fundamental fact that our police and national security agencies are working to protect our rights and freedoms, and it is jihadist terrorist who endanger our security and want to take away those very rights and freedoms. Under our government, Canada is not sitting on the sidelines, as the Liberals and NDP would have us do. Instead, we are joining our allies in the international coalition to fight ISIL.

I would like to take this opportunity to dispel some serious misconceptions about the important bill.

First, the definition of activities that undermine the security of Canada applies only to part 1 of Bill C-51, which would enact the security of Canada information sharing act. Under the security of Canada information sharing act, information could only be shared if it related to a specific activity that would undermine the sovereignty, security or territorial integrity of Canada, or the lives or the security of the people of Canada. Information that meets this threshold may only be shared if it is relevant to the recipient organization's jurisdiction or responsibilities for national security.

First and foremost is national security. The security of Canada information sharing act notes for clarity that lawful advocacy,

protest, dissent and artistic expression do not fall within the definition of activities that undermine the security of Canada. Even if some activities of advocacy, some that the member spoke about, protest, dissent or artistic expression are unlawful if they violate the Criminal Code, they would also need to have a national security impact to qualify. Therefore, in addition to being criminal, they would actually need to undermine the sovereignty, security or territorial integrity of Canada. As Rosa Parks did by sitting in her seat, while it may at the time have been deemed unlawful, it certainly would not have met any of those three thresholds.

The act would not authorize any new collection or use of personal information, and recipient institutions would still be limited by their lawful mandate in the collection and use of information, including information received under the act. The act does not override specific limitations respecting collection or sharing of information and recipient institution statutes.

Part 4 of Bill C-51 would amend the CSIS Act. This is not linked to the security of Canada information sharing act. In fact, part 4 of the bill would mandate CSIS to disrupt threats to the security of Canada. The concept of a threat to the security of Canada is clearly defined in the act and includes terrorism, espionage, sabotage and foreign-influenced activities. It also includes violent or unlawful covert acts to overthrow our system of government.

• (1920)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, once again, I am dismayed on the point that the word “lawful” was removed in 2001, because it inevitably does include non-violent civil disobedience, wildcat strikes and perhaps events that take place without a permit.

The language to which the parliamentary secretary referred is the very definition that I just read out, which numerous legal experts, including 100 law professors in our country, four former prime ministers and five former Supreme Court justices, have said is vague and over broad. In particular, the Privacy Commissioner for our country has said it would actually blow a hole through privacy rights. That is why it is a very scandalous reality that the Privacy Commissioner is not allowed to testify at the Bill C-51 public safety hearings that are taking place just now.

I will also add for anyone listening that the act would allow the sharing of information “to any person, for any purpose”. This is a dangerous provision for information sharing and it should be removed.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, we could stand here and do this all day and all night. The fact is that it is clear that the member is trying to find specific issues. I have relayed them back. She gave an example. I stated the example. In this case, it was an American example, Rosa Parks, who certainly would not have been arrested under any kind of conspiracy or any kind of national security act. The member knows it.

Instead, I would love to hear her speak about the issue of national security we face here in this country from a jihadist movement that has actually acted here in Canada on two occasions that we know of. We have prevented other terrorist activities from happening. What I would like to hear from her, instead of getting into the intangibles of the legislation, which it is clear she has an opinion on, is whether she supports the direction this government is moving in. That is certainly the direction most Canadians believe we should be moving in.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a follow-up to a question about a policy that was put in place in northeastern Newfoundland on fisheries management. It is about the northern shrimp issue.

Before I get to that, however, I would like to express my condolences in the House to the people of the town of Cottlesville. They have a plant there that employs 150 to 200 people. This past early Sunday, the plant burned down completely, and it is not to reopen. We now have 150 to 200 people out of work who are trying to find work. It is so difficult within these communities because of the nature of the seasonal work and because of how small they are and how dependent they are on the fishery.

Back to the policy in question, what I had asked about was what is called LIFO, or last in, first out.

When it comes to cuts in the shrimp sector, there are basically two sectors we talk about: the offshore and the inshore. In the offshore, there are much larger boats and factory trawlers. They are well off the shores, so they harvest the shrimp, they process it there, and it goes to market. Yes, they provide employment for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That is true.

The inshore sector is the one people see if they have watched a show called *Cold Water Cowboys*. Those are the boats. These boats are certainly less than 65 feet. In this particular sector are the vast majority of people who live in small fishing villages and on the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is where they work. They work either on the boat or in the plants that process the shrimp itself.

With drastic cuts in shrimp because of the fact that the stocks have declined, cuts had to be made on quotas for each sector. The problem is that the government made in excess of a 25% cut for the inshore sector and only a small cut for the offshore sector.

If we face drastic cuts like this, the entire sector and all the individuals and stakeholders within it should share in that pain. It is an uneven and unfair regime. It does not comply with what we call adjacency, with the people living closest to the resource, in this case, the area 6 shrimp fishing area, being top of mind. We are asking the government to review this type of management principle.

The government will contend that we came up with it as the Liberal Party in 1997. It was talked about, but it was never enacted.

The worst part about this is that the government is asking the inshore fleet, nearest the shore, to take the vast majority of the cuts. The problem is that in 2007, they asked them to invest in that fishery by making these licenses permanent.

This is the situation we are in. I hope that the government will reconsider the last in, first out policy, or as the locals like to say, me included, maybe we should have a FISHNL policy, which is “first in, still here, not leaving”.

● (1925)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and friend for raising the issue again. I can assure him, as I did about a month ago, that our government remains committed to the economic prosperity of our harvesters and the sustainability of all of our fisheries.

The member does not seem to recall that the last in, first out policy, or LIFO, was introduced in the mid-1990s under a Liberal majority government. Although he has described the issue fairly well, let me review the history of it.

The offshore fleet had been developing the northern shrimp fishery since the early 1970s. By the 1990s, it was clear that there was an increase in the abundance of shrimp, which allowed temporary entrants, mostly inshore harvesters, to benefit from the increase in shrimp stock available at that time. When this new access was granted to the inshore fishery in 1997, it was made clear that this access would change in line with shrimp stock contractions and that the harvesters who last entered the fishery would be the first to exit.

This is the basic principle, of course, of what we refer to now as the last in, first out policy, also known as LIFO, as my friend has said.

If the member wants to know more about the introduction of this policy, he could consult his colleague, the member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte. As I understand, he was a member of the government at that time.

Under LIFO, in shrimp fishing area 6, for example, from 1997 to 2009, the inshore fleet received 90% of any increases, while the offshore fleet received only the remaining 10%. Now that the stocks have changed, the LIFO policy is in effect, as was agreed to by participants. While quota decisions are never easy, our priority has to be the sustainability of the stock for the benefit of future generations.

As I have said, our government is committed to sustainable fisheries. Our thorough fisheries science and research are an integral part of fulfilling this responsibility and form the backbone of all our decision-making process. The scientific process to review the status of key shrimp stocks off Newfoundland and Labrador and in the Arctic occurred recently. Results were presented to industry stakeholders during consultations at an advisory meeting held in the first week of March.

Our government undertakes this process to ensure that industry has an opportunity to comment and provide its feedback. These views help inform recommendations for quota.

The annual management plan takes into full consideration industry input and the best available scientific information. Furthermore, it is very encouraging that 2014 was a year of particularly high prices for shrimp. Early indications for 2015 are that prices for shrimp may remain relatively high. Coupled with lower fuel costs and low interest rates, this presents a real economic opportunity for harvesters.

Finally, I would like to note that we will continue to engage with our northern shrimp industry groups on this fishery. When it comes to fish harvesting decisions, we always look for the right balance between maximizing economic opportunities for fishermen and ensuring sustainable fisheries for generations to come.

• (1930)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, this is not a question. I am just going to comment.

The member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission was elected when I was elected, 11 years ago now, and he has been for quite some time the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. There have been several ministers, and he has been steadfast as the parliamentary secretary.

Do not let the title fool anyone. He has been a leader in that particular portfolio, whether it was shrimp, small craft harbours, vessel stability, the new Fisheries Act, and so on and so forth. Through all of that, he has been incredibly respectful, knowledgeable, and good to all members in the House who had questions and concerns about fisheries in this country.

I understand he is not running in the next election. I would like to take this opportunity to say to him in the House, on the record, thank you, sir, for your service. You did it very well. Thanks, Randy, and all the best.

The Deputy Speaker: The last couple of comments were not parliamentary.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for those kind words. I have enjoyed working with him. Some of that time was on the fisheries committee as well. I know he works very hard for his constituents, and I appreciate that.

Just as I began, let me say that we are committed to ensuring that our hard-working fishermen, whether they be in British Columbia or in Newfoundland and Labrador, have every economic opportunity while making sure that these fisheries remain sustainable.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have seen some changes in the northern shrimp stock over the years and have had to adapt as necessary. It was made clear when the LIFO policy was introduced that if changes should come to the stock, then the ones that were last in would be the first to exit. These were the terms agreed to previously by all parties, and it is our view that they should continue to be respected.

[*Translation*]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during question period on November 28, 2014, I asked the Prime Minister to clarify his position on CBC/Radio-Canada. We did not have to wait long before he made it very clear what he really thinks of our public broadcaster.

In an interview with a private Quebec City radio station, the Prime Minister described Radio-Canada as a hotbed of left wingers, or at the very least employees who hate Conservative values.

I think that all Canadians were shocked by these inaccurate and disparaging remarks. However, this is not the first time that the Conservatives have attacked this important Canadian institution. Let us remember that in February 2011 the minister who is now responsible for National Defence accused the corporation of lying all the time.

I recently indicated in the House that the insinuations and threats made by Carl Vallée, the Prime Minister's former press secretary, to CBC/Radio-Canada's news director are unacceptable.

If that is how the Conservatives plan to woo Quebecers and Canadians, then I can tell them that it will not work. Quebecers and Canadians care about CBC/Radio-Canada too much for that.

As a result of the Prime Minister's decision to cut funding to anyone who has a different opinion, the crown corporation has suffered, and it will take decades to repair the damage. According to union president Alex Levasseur, "Not only will 800 people lose their jobs, but the Radio-Canada mandate is also suffering". Eight hundred people is about 10% of all staff at CBC/Radio-Canada.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees, which represents CBC/Radio-Canada employees, recently demanded an apology for the absurd and unfounded comments made by the Prime Minister. Thousands of people work at CBC/Radio-Canada. These people have political opinions as varied and as private as those of most Canadians. Perhaps the Conservatives should take that to mean that all Canadians hate them.

After four years of observation as a member of Parliament, I can say that the Prime Minister does not like CBC/Radio-Canada. The best word I can think of to describe it is "contempt". Contempt for the diversity of public opinion, contempt for quality information, contempt for freedom of expression, contempt for freedom of the press, contempt for journalistic freedom and contempt for freedom of the media in general.

As the critic for the Francophonie, I am very concerned about the consequences the latest round of cuts at Radio-Canada will have on Canada's francophone community.

Adjournment Proceedings

Since 1936, the CBC has been a beacon for culture and has contributed to the development of our identities and our linguistic realities. However, never since 1936 has any prime minister treated the CBC with such contempt.

The Conservatives have given themselves a lot of rights, but they seem to have forgotten that they also have obligations, including obligations under the Broadcasting Act and the Official Languages Act.

I am worried. The people of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and people from across Canada are also very worried and are coming together in support of this cause. Organizations like Ensemble sauvons Radio-Canada and Tous amis de Radio-Canada are bringing together thousands of individuals, artists and public figures. Consider the thousands of petitions that we have been presenting to the House for over a year.

The NDP is the only party standing up against the Conservatives' senseless cuts. It is the watchdog for Canadians' rights and has a blueprint for society to get Canada headed in the right direction.

Canadians are overwhelmingly opposed to the Conservatives' partisan plan to tear down this flagship institution that makes us unique. We need a strong public broadcaster.

● (1935)

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure what the question was there. It kind of jumped all over in about four, five or maybe six different areas. However, what I will do is give a brief overview of the CBC and then certainly respond to a direct allegation that the member has made on two occasions, including here, now, and once in question period.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the matter of our national public broadcaster. Our government provides the CBC with incredible funding on a yearly basis. The CBC is responsible for its own operations. It is up to the CBC to provide programming that Canadians actually want to watch and listen to in either of our two official languages.

Canada enjoys a sophisticated and complex broadcasting system within which CBC/Radio-Canada exists. The role of CBC/Radio-Canada as a national public broadcaster is enshrined right within the Broadcasting Act. In fact, the act affirms that the national public broadcaster has the freedom of expression and journalistic creativity and programming independence from government. That does not mean that it is not subject to journalistic standards. The member needs to clearly understand that. These principles are stated multiple times in the Broadcasting Act itself.

The corporation is governed by an independent board of directors appointed by the Governor in Council. In Canada, the role and mandate of the national public broadcaster also stem from the country's particularities. These include our two national languages and a large and sparsely populated territory, and reflect the needs and interests of our increasingly diverse population, our aboriginal population, and the different realities within all of our regions.

CBC/Radio-Canada is expected to inform, enlighten and entertain Canadians and should be distinctly Canadian. It is also expected to actively contribute to the exchange and flow of cultural expression. The public broadcaster is charged with reflecting Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of particular regions. It must strive to produce programming of equal quality in either English or French, and reflect the needs of each official language minority community.

It is a broad mandate, which our national public broadcaster strives to meet by reaching Canadians through a myriad of over 30 television, radio and digital services in both official languages, in eight aboriginal languages and in five languages on an international service. Again, it does not make it immune to the principles stated within the Broadcasting Act.

In order to fulfill its mandate of serving Canadians, CBC/Radio-Canada must manage its various services in a professional and responsible manner in the current environment. Our government provides the corporation with, literally, over \$1 billion in annual funding. It is an independent crown corporation. It is responsible for managing its funds effectively to meet its mandate and deliver content of interest to Canadians.

Our government does expect the CBC/Radio-Canada to use these funds as effectively as possible and provide Canadians with content they find interesting and content they want to see and hear.

Let me be clear about the matter the member mentioned though. The CBC ombudsman was very clear on the matter. With respect to this documentary, the ombudsman found that the rules of journalistic standards and practices had not been correctly applied. We respect the ombudsman's finding, so should the member opposite.

● (1940)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member regarding what Canadians want to hear and watch, I would remind him that the people of northern Ontario are soon going to lose the French broadcasting of the Montreal Canadiens' hockey games, even though they want to keep it.

At the national level, one of the main concerns of the groups we talked about earlier is the funding for CBC/Radio-Canada, especially for official language minority communities.

We in the NDP promise to cancel the \$115 million in cuts imposed on CBC/Radio-Canada. This is important, and I think the hon. member can understand that. If he has \$100 and someone takes away 20%, he will be left with \$80. He can go on talking about the \$80 he has left and how he will use it, but the fact remains that he will have less.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, the member makes some sort of argument that the success, quality, growth, independence and delivery of service that is completed by a crown corporation is going to vastly improve just because money is offered and put on the table. She can say that her party is going to contribute more. That does not mean quality moves up. That does not mean that *Hockey Night in Canada* stays at the CBC.

Adjournment Proceedings

What the member needs to understand is the rapidly changing development of programming, of what Canadians want to see, whether it be the demographic of young or old in the country.

What is important to understand is the responsibility of the CBC as a public broadcaster but also the quality of programming that it offers, the quality of programming that it delivers on and the quality of programming that individuals and families across the country watch. When we turn to the CBC we want to make sure that people are going to stay and watch. It is based on quality.

The red herring argument is that somehow money is going to solve all. I think you know, Mr. Speaker, as you have been around here a long time, that money is not the answer to everything. It is quality.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:43 p.m.)

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